GAZETTEER OF INDIA

KERALA STATE GAZETTEER

VOL. II

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

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VOL. II

By

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K. KARUNAKARAN,
CHIEF MINISTER,
GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

INTRODUCTION

Part I of the II Volume of the State Gazetteer of Kerala is being released. I commend the arduous and painstaking effort of the State Editor, Shri K.K. Ramachandran Nair, in presenting the book for the benefit of those interested in Kerala's ancient history. It deals in a co-ordinated manner, with a period of our history of which little has been made known. There is a connecting link, and in order to understand the Kerala of today, one has to have a perception of what preceded it and what the causal factors behind the main events were. To cite Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, "it is worthwhile knowing the past in order to know better the present."

I hope this Volume will revive the interest of the past in the minds of many of the newer generation and kindle interest in the study of Kerala's rich heritage. There is a dearth of good books on the history of Kerala, especially in its ancient phase. This book fills the vacuum, and fills it well.

The book, I hope, will stimulate interest in the study of Kerala's history.

Sd
CHIEF MINISTER

PREFACE

An objective asessment of the ancient history of Kerala is attempted in the background of the rationale of an inter-diciplinary approach containing the results of modern research. Hitherto the ancient history of Kerala was largely interwoven with legend and myth. Recent advances in historical studies however warrant a reconsideration. The traditionalist study of *Tirvithamkur Charithram* (1867) by Pachu Moothathu and K. P. Padmanabha Menon's Four Volume History of Kerala, form the starting point of the study of Kerala History. To this, was reinforced, the path breaking almost iconoclastic interpretation of Prof: Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai which added a new dimension to historiography. His focus was centred on Kerala as an integral constituent of a Tamilakom in the Sangam Age, in contrast with the considered view of earlier scholars of Kerala as a well defined entity in itself in matters of religion, society, language, creed and race.

A civilisation can come into existence through the disintegration of one or more civilization of an older generation and the transformation of some of their elements into a new configuration. This process termed 'affiliation' by none-less than Arnold Toynbee —the genuinely civilised and dispassionate cosmopolitan — is brought into the foreground when judged in the context of Kerala History. Distinctly an affiliate of the earlier Dravidian and Tamil Civilization, subsequently it intertwined with the Arab and Occidental cultures. The assimilation has been so much that it is impossible to divide and detect.

The role of the Sangam works, in the early history of Kerala needs further probe by scholars. Such an effort will throw much light on the obscure aspects of archaeology, anthropology, sociology and linguistics of the period. The pertinent observation of George L. Hart of the University of Wisconsin — "Ancient Tamil literature, was written by high class poets who followed the model of the oral poetry of the Panans and Paraiyans, men of lowest castes, and is devoid of both high-class and Brahmanical bias. For this reason, it gives a more accurate picture of the

social life and customs of the area to which it belongs than does any other classical literature of India"— is germane.

The lacunae in the conclusions of Prof: Elamkulam have been considerably filled by the studies emanating from contemporary sources like Department of History, University of Kozhikode, Deccan College, Poona, Saiva Siddhantha Works Publishing Society, Madras, Society for South Indian Studies at the University of Wisconsin, U. S. A. etc. Mention undoubtedly has to be made of the valuable contributions of contemporary Indian and Western historians, among whom the most prominent are Prof: K. A. Neelakanta Sastry, Dr. K. K. Pillay, T. V. Mahalingam, M. G. S. Narayanan, Iravatham Mahadevan, K. G. Krishnan, Burton Stein, Gilbert Slater, Oppert. The Journal of Kerala Studies of the Department of History, University of Kerala has significantly assisted to bring to the fore the results of the advanced studies and investigations. Still many a void needs to be filled, which a future historian would well be justified in attempting.

The magnanimous gesture of the higher authorities, particularly Shri K. Karunakaran, Chief Minister of Kerala, Shri T. M. Jacob, Minister for Education and Shri M. S. K. Ramaswamy, Commissioner and Secretary, Higher Education in permitting me to continue the work even after superannuation has to be gratefully appreciated and acknowledged. But for their unstinted support at all stages, this work would have floundered in the mire of procrastination and would not have seen the light of the day and to them I feel specially beholden.

Shri A. Balakrishnan, Joint Director, Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Kerala, working as Editor who by constant prodding and helpful suggestions was largely instrumental for bringing to a close a venture that had begin to seem unending. To Smt. J. Sarala Devi, Confidential Assistant and Smt. P. Sulochana Bai and Shri P. Thomas, Senior Grade Typists who did all the tedious typing and retyping of drafts, I am deeply ...ful. Sarvashree V.A. Abdul Khader, Sub-Editor, C.A. Chandrika, Head Clerk, P. Balakrishnan Nair, Senior Grade

Typist and G. Antony and Devasahayam, Peons are the others of the establishment to whom thanks are due.

I am grateful to Shri K. Asokan, Managing Director and Shri M.C. George, Production Manager and the staff of Kerala Books and Publications Society, for the keen enthusiasm displayed in the publication of the book - a pioneer attempt in their Monocomp photype setting machine.

I feel it is high time to dispel some exaggerated notions about Kerala that have cropped up chiefly in the travelogues and historical surveys in the realm of colonial literature and hence greater stress has been pin-pointed to the study of internal sources with less emphasis on alien or foreign.

I shall be gratified if the students of ancient Kerala History find an array of new facts arranged in this voume in the light of recent reassessment of historical scholarship.

Trivandrum,
1 — 1 — 1986

ADOOR K.K. RAMACHANDRAN NAIR,
STATE EDITOR

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CHAPTER II
HISTORY
I ANCIENT PERIOD

PREHISTORY*

To a student of the pre-history of India the uneven cultural development is a factor to be reckoned with. The ancient historical period begins, based on latest research evidence, in about the 6th century B. C. in Northern India; Southern India comprising the States of Andhra, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala were emerging from the last stages of Stone Age during this period. This period again should not be confused to conclude, that Kerala, as a whole, had attained a particular even cultural status. To this day, one shall find, on visiting places in the northern region of Kerala, variations in cultural and economic status. Nuances of dress, dialect, physical appearance of the people, customs, manners, food habits, standards of living, climate, geographical features, all these catch the eye of the discerning observer. It would therefore be worthwhile to study the pre-history of Kerala "in the broadest perspective as a part of an effort to understand the common past of humanity."[1] This view is further accentuated by no less a historiographer than Arnold Toynbee : "We must not ignore these earlier and longer chapters of human history if we have recognized the need for making a comprehensive study of human affairs"[2].

Unlike in other parts of India no fire from any quarter was lit on the pre-historic plain of Kerala history. There is very great lull in the pre-historic investigation studies. Consequently

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* There prevails a lot of confusion among scholars in the terminology of the terms pre-history and proto-history with regard to South Indian History. The result of recent researches show that the Iron Age megalithic culture of Deccan may be assigned to Circa 1000—800 B.C. In the deep south the culture flourished upto 2nd or 3rd century A.D. with regional variations. In this book only two terms pre-history and history are adopted. The term pre-history is employed as comprising the various Stone Ages inclusive of Neolithic.

1. Graham Clark on "Perspectives in Pre-history" (Proceedings of the Pre-historic Society for 1959, Vol. XXV).

2. Toynbee — A Study of History (First One-Volume Edition, 1981, p.48).

the pre-history of Kerala is still shrouded in obscurity. Pre-eminently it is a *terra incognita.* If Egypt is the archaeologist's paradise, Kerala is the reverse. It is impossible to introduce any accurate chronology in the pre-history of Kerala. However claims are often laid that Kerala stood on the highway of human civilisation and that she had contacts with the world-wide cultural currents and the old stone monuments were part of that story. Commencing with the pre-historic caves and varied contacts first with the Roman World and subsequently with China and the Near East, Kerala with its monuments occupies a key position in Indian Archaeology. Aside from the sporadic and limited excavations, there has not been any stratigraphic dig on the whole coast of Kerala, the failure of which is instrumental for "the most glaring gaps in South India's early history."[3]

Kerala does not find a place in the Palaeolithic map of India. There is no trace of the Palaeolithic man having lived in Kerala. Sankalia has the following interesting observation to make on the absence of Palaeoliths in Kerala: "Kerala and Malabar have so far not yielded any Palaeoliths, probably because no search has been made. But it is likely that here there are ancient sea beaches, as there are further up near Bombay, which on examination might be found to be implementiferous. Or it may be that the coastal belt is of recent growth. Thus the reasons for the absence of palaeoliths might be truly geographical."[4]

A distinctive feature of palaeolithic antiquities is that the vast number of them are made of quartzite. Quartzite is not to be found in abundance in Kerala. Palaeolithic man would have avoided forest regions also as it was difficult for him to explore them with his crude primitive implements. According to Dr. A. Ayyappan[5] the paucity of palaeoliths in Kerala is due to the fact that this part of South India came to be populated

3. Archaeology in South India – Accomplishments and prospects – Clarence Maloney. (See Appendix – I – for details).

4. Pre-history and Proto-history in India and Pakistan – H.D. Sankalia, p. 39.

5. Pre-historic and Proto-historic Kerala. Kerala Darshan, 1958.

only during and after the neolithic agricultural revolution. Primitive man is said to have favoured park lands and avoided thick jungles infested by wild beasts. As long as park lands were available the primitive South Indian would not have felt attracted to the jungles of Malabar. The likelihood is that when population pressure increased after the agricultural revolution in the eastern districts, men in search of new lands for cultivation began to cross the Ghats to colonise the valleys and narrow coastal plains of Kerala. Hence Kerala as an area of "relative isolation" could not have been the abode of man in that remote period.[6] It is said that the mainstream culture took more time to reach Kerala than elsewhere in the Indian Sub-continent and that it was a later phase of the peninsular Indian Cultural evolution.

The abundance of trap-rock on the West Coast points to the settlements of Neolithic man in Kerala as opposed to the Palaeoliths.[7] With regard to the distribution of earliest stone tools discovered, nothing definite can be said as no attempts have been made to classify them typologically. The three stage terminology of Early, Middle and Later Stone Ages is therefore not applicable to the Kerala Coast as the three phases are rather indistinct or totally absent. As Clarence Maloney observes: "The need is for stratigraphic excavation of a number of Early Stone Age sites, correlation of Deccan geological features with river terraces and ocean levels, evaluation of faunal remains and firm dating by radio-active isotopes." In most sites discovered the implements of the Late Stone Age (called by some authors

6. In an article in the Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. IV, Part IV, pp. 497–502, a writer claims the discovery of the first Paleolithic tools from different parts of Palghat District in April 1974. The collections according to him include Choppers, Scrapers, Bores, Flakes, Cores and Protohand-axe. The articles do not reveal any study based on geological features, or evaluation of faunal remains and firm dating by radio active isotopes. No attempt has been made to evaluate the tools on the basis of radio carbon chronology of Indian Proto-historic cultures.

7. The only instance of a collection of a Neolithic celt is the one that was collected by Bruce Foote from the foot of the Kanycode hills in Palghat District. But this lone instance of a Neolithic cist should not lead one to arrive at a hasty conclusion that Kerala found a place in the Lithic map of India especially in the circumstances that the time and date of these monuments have not been clearly specified by any scholar.

as Mesolithic) characterised by small tools called Microliths are found. A long range of Microlithic tools on quartz were collected by K. R. U. Todd from Chevayur near Calicut that closely resembled the collections from the Mysore plateau.[8] Microliths might have been used from the fifth millenium B. C. but they continued to be in use after the invention of pottery even into the Iron Age. The Microlithic tools of Chevayoor which Todd discovered comprise only surface collections. They do not bear any similarity with such sites as Bellary and Brahmagiri in Deccan and so they may not be dated about 2300 B. C. This cannot be considered to be the first indication of habitation along the humid West Coast. Allchin[9] divided the early Neolithics of the Deccan into three phases, viz., the first (cattle keeping economy) datable 2300 to 1800; the second (agricultural economy) from 2000 or 1800 to 1400 B. C. and the third from 1400 B. C. According to him the settled Neolithic way of life became vogue in most areas in South India in thė second millenium B. C. except in Kerala where forests were too thick to be controlled with Neolithic tools.

Iron Age

The Iron Age in South India is intimately associated with two distinct types of sites—the habitations and the cemeteries. These habitations and grave sites herald an era of iron using culture which is characterised by three distinctive traits—the use of iron, black and red ware and megalithic funerary custom. The pre-historic remains like the natural caves used by primitive men as dwelling houses discovered in the various parts of the State indicate the existence of a distinct neolithic culture. The pre-historic relics so far discovered belong to the megalithic burial order. It may also be possible that some of them belong to a part of the Copper and Bronze Ages.

Chronology of the Iron-Age

The time bracket of the iron-age megalithic culture of

8. The Stone-tipped Arrow (London, Cory, Adams and Mackay, 1966).

9. Allchin B – The Birth of Indian Civilisation – Baltimore Penguin, 1968.

South India has been a matter of great controversy among scholars. Sir Mortimer Wheeler first suggested that the iron-age megalithic culture flourished between 200 B. C. and middle of the first century A. D.[10] Thapar also preferred the date 200 B. C. to first century A. D.[11] This dating is not accepted by modern archaeologists. Haimendorf questions the inconsistency of Wheeler's theory by arguing that the Asokan edicts of Brahmagiri have been addressed to the primitive pastoralist neolithic folk, and that the megalithic people must have arrived at the site when Asoka had already issued his inscriptions. Accordingly Wheeler revised his earlier dating and conceded a time span between 3rd century B. C. and first century A. D.[12] But this dating is also at present not acceptable to many archaeologists of South India. Gordon[13] (1958) and Haimendorf[14] suggested 700—400 B. C. Subba Rao—600 B. C. onwards[15] Banerjee 700 B. C.[16] onwards; Sircar early half of the first millenium B. C.[17] and Leshnik [18] 300 B. C. to 100 A. D. for the megalithic complex of South India. The dates suggested above are for the megaliths and not for the early stone-age.[19] All the above authors arrived at the above dates not purely on

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10. Brahmagiri and Chandravally 1957: Megalithic and other culture in Mysore State — Ancient India No. 4 — p. 202 & p. 303

11. 1957 Maski 1954: A Chalcolithic site of Southern Deccan Ancient India No. 15 — page 16 to 20

12. Earlier India and Pakistan — 1959. London.

13. Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture, 1958.

14. The problems and prospects of Indian Anthropology PASI Anthrop and Archaeological section — Presidential address pp. 175—189.

15. Personality of India, 1955, Baroda, p. 121.

16. The Iron Age in India, 1965, Delhi.

17. The Dravidian Problem. Man in India, Vol. 35, pp. 31—38.

18. South Indian Megalithic Burials — the Pandukal complex, 1974.

19. See Sreedhara Menon's Survey of Kerala History, p. 45

the basis of archaeological data but also taking into consideration various theories on the origin and spread of megalithic culture. Of late Nagaraja Rao from his examination of the Hallur site in Karnataka by carbon samples came to the conclusion that the dates fall around 1000 B. C. The dates revealed from carbon 14 tests from certain other areas also agreed with the date of the Hallur site as fixed by Nagaraja Rao. So the present tendency on the part of archaeology is to assign the beginning of the use of iron somewhere around 1200 B. C.

The terminal date of this cultural phase cannot be precisely arrived at. Wheeler assigned the first century A. D. basing his conclusion on the Sathavahana coins and Roman wares. Later studies basing on certain historical circumstances assigned a span of about 6 centuries for the early use of iron i.e. around 1000 B. C. to the commencement of the early historical period in about 400 B. C. The carbon samples from the post megalithic levels from North Arcot District and Guntoor District revealed circa 310 and 400 B. C. as the end date of the culture. The problem of megalithic burials is also complicated. One thing that is certain as revealed from the latest research findings is that the practice of building megaliths out-lived the iron-age. However the evidences from the megalithic burials may be used fruitfully for understanding the early iron age culture. M. S. Nagaraja Rao and B. K. Gururaja Rao in their article on the Chronology of iron-age in South India,[20] pertinently remarks : 'Three factors have guided us in this direction (i) the contemporaneity of iron age habitations and the burials have been proved at least in some cases, as in Brahmagiri and Maski; (ii) The iron-age traits i. e., the use of iron and black-and-red wares are invariably associated with the megaliths, thus establishing their cultural affinity; (iii) The historical sources reveal the advent and progressive spread of northern religions and the associated socio-religious customs from about the 4th-3rd century B. C. onwards. As megalithicism is not a part of any of these religions, this should be a trait of the locally prevailing earlier culture which in this context is necessarily of the iron age complex."

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20. Essays in Indian Proto-history, 1979, Delhi, p. 328

The outstanding of the pre-historic monuments met with are dolmens, both multiple and isolated, post-hole cists, menhirs, kudeikals or hood or umbrella stones, Topikals or hat-stones and rock-cut caves. These monuments in general may be called Megaliths. Megaliths derived from Greek *megas* which means great and *lithos* meaning stone are a "particular kind of monuments erected usually but not necessarily with huge, rough undressed stones." The Megalithic monuments in South India were identical with those in North Africa, Spain and other parts of Europe. The Rock-cut tombs of Kerala which Sir Mortimer Wheeler examined were quite parallel with those in other parts of South India, Western Asia and Europe. According to him the megaliths of the South India belonged to a past period and were mainly tombs.

These relics are particularly associated with the cult of the dead. The custom prominent among the Neolithics was to raise works of rough stone over the dead buried in urns. The idea behind this would have been that the spirit of the dead should be supplied with accommodation as in life. This idea seems to have been significantly borne out in the erection of large pieces of unhewn stones. A large number of such stones have come to light from the hills and forests of Kerala. It is, however, important to remember that these monuments, though every one of them is some kind of a tomb, are not primary burials. Almost all are secondary burials; that is, the body or bodies after death were left exposed to beasts and weather and it was only later that theremnantswere buried in a pot (called urn) or a chest-like stone (rectangular cist) above the ground and in the shape of a table with one huge capstone covering the three or more upright stones. It was called a "dolmen" or "dolmenoid cist", or a legged, oblong vessel with a separate lid and legs (called sarcophagus) along with the most important possessions of the dead-iron weapons and tools, shell ornaments, semi-precious beads, pots of various shapes and even horse-bits and occasionally coins. The view that the bodies of the dead were previously "macerated"[21] in pits surrounded by stone

21. That is, the place where bodies were exposed and later a few selected bones picked up and interred in a cist grave called "inverted towers of silence" by Wheeler.

circles is also not confirmed by excavation at Nagarjunakonda.[22] "In fact here two pits contained fully articulated skeletons *which indicate that we may expect in some megaliths, complete burials and not necessarily collections of bones gathered at a subsequent date.*"[23]

That the pits were prepared for the secondary burials and then enclosed by large slabs of stones and the whole finally surrounded by a circle of stone implies a fairly well established and prosperous social organization. It has been observed[24] that these megalith builders of South India, while they chose high, rocky ground for the burials owing to the proximity of the raw material—laterite blocks or granite or underground caves in Kerala—had also dug irrigation tanks in the flat alluvial plains indicating thereby that they were not only a settled people, but very intelligent agriculturists.[25] Perhaps some idea of their life can be deduced from the early Sangam literature. Haimendorf, a cultural anthropologist, is of the view that these megalith-builders were a section of Mediterranean stock of people who probably came to the West Coast by sea, entered South India in about 500 B. C. and spread northwards subduing

the earlier neolithic and microlithic people who were in a semi-nomadic, food—gathering stage of culture. Gordon Childe has suggested: "the megaliths are concentrated in the South of the Peninsula in areas not likely to be affected by landborne impulses from Iran but exposed rather to maritime influences if their distribution does suggest inspiration from the West, that must surely have come by sea".[26] As the distribution of South

22. Indian Archaeological Report, 1959—60, pp. 2 and 9 respectively.

23. Quoted in Indian Archaeology To-day, p. 102, 1962, Bombay.

24. Srinivasan, K. R. and Banerjee, N. R. in Ancient India, No. 9, p. 109 and Banerjee, N. R. in Ancient India, No. 12, 1956, p. 23.

25. At Maski, however, Thapar noticed burials in the habitation area itself and a north-south orientation instead of the east-west, as well as a few other features. See Thapar, B. K. Ancient India No. 13, 1957, p. 27. Perhaps this is a legacy of influence due to inhabiting an earlier Chalcolithic site.

26. Gorden Childe, V, Megaliths.

Indian megaliths was almost coterminous with that of the Dravidian Languages, it is inferred that these people should have introduced the Dravidian languages in the region and on this surmise the origin of earliest Tamil is assigned to about 500 B., C.

It is already seen that the pre-historic antecedents of Kerala start with megalithic times. Kerala has got a spectacular variety of megalithic monuments spread over its different parts. It certainly forms part of the megalithic culture that prevailed from Hyderabad to Kanyakumari. But many of the Kerala types are distinctive and not found elsewhere. Regarding the megalithic monuments Ward and Conner in the *Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States* lay down as early as 1820 thus:[27] "There is no ancient monument deserving any particular notice. The *Pandookoolies*, or Barrows, those remains of primeval customs so common throughout the Peninsula are also found here, though they are not numerous;* some few have been observed in the Northern parts of the Cochin country: they there consist of three rude low pillars, crowned by a conical cap, cut from the laterite. It is curious that those sepulchres should be seen in the very wildest parts of the mountains, and nearly at the top of some of the highest. A few of the most elevated ridges of the Cardamom Hills are seen surmounted by a series of rude slabs of granite placed like pillars, that for some distance follow their course. It is difficult to believe them natural, almost equally so to suppose them artificial; nor are the wild fables of the Hill people calculated to illustrate their history, although the whole country swarms with temples dedicated to every divinity of the Hindoo Pantheon." Megalithic sites are known by the general name of "Korangupattada" which means the burial place of the monkeys.[28]

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27. Opp. cit. p. 19—21.

* In one opened at Chokanaad, there was found a large earthern jar containing only a few rice husks.

28. The tribals associate it with the great monkey army which Rama and Hanuman led through South India to the conquest of Ceylon. The contention of some scholars is that this points to the Aryan invasion of this part of the land. While the

There are more than 400 megalithic sites distributed all over South India.[29] It is interesting to note that the study of megalithic sites began in India since the first discovery of a rock-cut burial chamber in Malabar by Babington. The hundreds of megaliths discovered since present a perplexing picture of variations in morphological forms, contents and regional

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question of Aryan invasion is still unsettled, the view predominant is that this points either to Dravidian or proto-Dravidian migration. To Sankalia, this is to indicate an ethnic relationship between ancient inhabitants of Summer, Ela and India (Aspects of Indian Archaeology, 1977, New Delhi, p. 43).

The Uralis, the hill tribe, call them *Pandukuzhis*, viz., pits dug by Pandavas to whom ancient mysterious monuments all over India are attributed. The legend that is spun round this natural phenomenon is humorously put in the following words "wherever you find five boulders of stones with a small one close by, popular imagination sees the miraculous memorial of the five heroic Pandavas and their faithful consort" (The Parasurama Tradition, I.C. Chacko, Rama Varma Research Institute Bulletin, 1945, p. 2).

Burial pots or jars of various dimensions and shapes are found in large numbers in Kerala and other parts of South India. Some representative specimens are kept in the Museum at Trivandrum. Most of them were discovered by the British Resident Mr. Mac Gregor. Such ancient jars are referred in Tamil works of old by the name tali or *Mutumakkattali* or *Mutumakkatchchatti*. These terms simply mean jars for the aged. Mr. Swaminatha Aiyar in his edition of *Manimekalai* (1898, Page 408) says that such jars were dug out from Pattiswaram, Tirumetrali and some other villages in Kumbhakonam. They are known in those parts as *Matamatakkachchal*. In Madras it is known as *Pandivamanai* (Pandya's), in Travancore as *Mannmakkantali* in northern parts of Kerala as *Mitave* again in some parts of Malabar as *Nhanhnhanhani* and coming to the dialectic variation in the north of Kerala viz., Palghat they are known as *Nhanhnhantoti*. In Palghat the receptacles found and wide-mouthed earthenware tubs of perfectly circular horizontal section. Such earthenware are even to this day used in Palghat to water cattle. Of course the dialectic regional variations represent Nanhnhanati in Malayalam which means cache. It will be interesting to cite a tradition prevalent in some parts of Kerala on this subject. When people got shrinked and shrivelled by extreme old age, they are kept in such jars. The jars were set on the holes in the walls of houses and known by the name Matakkuzhis. In *Manimekhala* it is said that the *Ajivikas* (a section of monks) had a custom of doing penance in such jars. The references to these burial jars are found in old Tamil works like *Puranaruru*, *Manimekalai*, *Takkayapparani*, *Kulottunka-Cholan Ula*, *Vikkirama-Cholan Ula* and *Tiruvenkattuppuranam*.

29. A Bibliography of Indian Megaliths, Madras, Ramachandran, K.S., 1971.

peculiarities. *Of the nine types classified on "the basis of the basic ritualistic features" the types falling under 'Subterranean rock-cut cave tombs and Topikals and Kudaikals are found in Kerala and South Canara of Karnataka.* The characteristics of these megaliths are described as follows. "The megaliths normally occur in separate cemeteries situated in non-arable lands away from habitation sites. They contain fragmentary secondary burials usually consisting of long bones, skull and or a few splinters collected from bodies previously exposed elsewhere. Along with these are deposited varieties of pots and iron implements —and occasionally gold, copper and bronze objects, beads of agate, carnelian, jasper, steatite, past and terracotta. The number and varieties of grave goods vary from megalith to megalith. Amongst pottery, the black and red ware predominates with varieties of bowls, globular pitchers with long neck, chalices, long pyriform vessels etc. The complete black and red polished wares too have the above shapes, and handles and knobbed lids. Globular pots, flat lamps, ringstands are made of unpolished red ware. The pyriform urns and sarcophagi used as funerary receptacles are normally handmade. Graffiti marks occur on the burial pottery too. Iron implements deposited include swords, daggers, lances, crowbars, flat axes, chisels, spades, hoes, sickles, bill-hooks, wedges, knives, tripods, hook-lamps and pans. Tridents, bells and horse-equipments like bit and bridle have also been found in some places. Bronze, copper and gold objects as well as beads and bangles occur only rarely. The megalithic grave repertoire is generally richer compared to what is found in the habitation sites.

On the basis of the above data, reserving various disputed aspects for further discussion, it can be generally stated that the South Indian iron age culture is characterised by three distinctive traits — the use of iron, black and red ware and megalithic funerary custom".[30]

An attempt has been made by the Archaeological Survey of India to standardise the megaliths in Tamilnadu and Kerala regions on a scientific basis under V. D. Krishna Swami and a

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30. Essays in Indian Proto history Chronology of Iron Age in South India. S. Nagaraju and B.K. Gururaja Rao, p. 323, Delhi, 1979.

set of terminologies are now available to describe the types in South India. The megalithic burials are broadly *classified into three viz., the Chamber tombs, the unchambered graves and monuments not actually associated with burials of the six main types and sub-types.* Of chamber tombs; the *Topikals, the Kudaikals* and the *rock-cut caves* are almost peculiar to Kerala. The *port-hole chamber tombs* also occur profusely in Kerala. In this type, "the chamber may be of either slabs or boulders. Further the chambers may be either cists or dolmenoid cists or dolmens. Further there is usually a port-hole in one of the orthostats. They are accordingly described as port-holed-cist, dolmenoid cist, dolmen".[31]

The *Topikals* or Hat stones are found in the laterite plains. "The chamber is conical in profile carrying a low convex circular capstone looking like a hat on a truncated top. Four Plano-convex triangular cut stones with tops truncated, are fixed in an inwardly inclining position so as to leave no gap vertically in between. On the truncated top is placed, a well cut and dressed hemispherical capstone. Externally at the bottom it is a paraboloid and internally, roughly rhombus in plan. The clinostats and the capstones are well cut and dressed so much when they are erected in required fashion, no space should be left between any two of them. The cutting and erection therefore imply at least empirical arithmetical calculations".[32] The pre-historic site as Cheramananangad in Trichur also known as Kudakalluparambu is a typical one of this kind. A varied type noticed in Cheramanangad *Topikals* is that instead of 4, there are 5 to 12 clinostats fixed in the same manner as that of *Topikal* obviously enclaving a larger area. This type is designated by archaeologists as *multiple Hoodstone.*

The *Kudaikals* consist of a burial pit covered at the top with roughly 'plano-convex capstone' of laterite. The shape of the capstone resembles the handleless umbrella made of palm leaves. Porkalam - Koduvayur, etc. are some of the famous

31. Typology of Megaliths in South India – A Sundara, Essays in Indian Proto-history, op.cit. 335.

32. Ibid., p. 336

sites containing these types. The rock-cut caves found at Chovannur, Kakkad, Aralam, Chitrari, Kalyad, contained many sites with underground chambers excavated in rocks. The ordinary type is a hemispherical dome with an opening at the top. The floor is even and circular in plan or sometimes it is a rectangular pit; in some cases there is a central opening facing the sky or pillar in the chamber. Usually the top opening is covered with a granite slab. A pecularity noted in the excavation at Chitrari in Wynad is that very close to some of the chambers there is a pit cut in the rock forming part of the chamber tomb. There is a view that this pit was dug for the primary disposal of the dead.

Tne urn burials falling under the unchambered burials are found in northern Kerala. Cylindrical pitburials are also found in northern Kerala. Cylindrical pitburials called "the barrows" are found extensively. In this type of burial a prominent cairn facing right over the pit burial but without bounding circle is seen. The barrows are either circular or ovaloid.

The menhirs are simple pit-burials having at the top a huge rough stone slab in upright position or slightly inclined on a side. The two menhirs in Bison Valley and one in Alapara having pit burials beneath are to be subjected to further examination by archaeologists in order to know their exact nature and function.

The *Sarcophagus* buriál i.e., reducing the death after internment to skeletal form, is found in the megaliths discovered from Feroke in Calicut.[33]

The excavations on a scientific basis conducted at Porkkalam by B.K. Thapar and by Y. D. Sarma on the rock-cut caves of Cochin have served to unveil a fairly good picture of the contents of megalithic culture prevalent in Kerala. The pre-dominant

33. In this type of burials are found "boat shaped burnt clay (= terracotta) troughs often with two rows of hollow legs ranging from 4 to 12 luted to it at the bottom and having separate lid to cover, containing pottery, iron objects and in some cases, human skeletal remains" (Ibid., p. 339).

fact as revealed by the monuments and excavations shows that even though it took more time for the main stream culture to reach the relatively isolated zone of Kerala, it stayed here for long and as remarked earlier, Kerala is perhaps the only region in the Indian sub-continent where megalithism is still a living institution among the Kurichias, Muduvans, Paniyars and other hill tribes living under the hallowed protection of the jungles and forests of High Ranges and Wynad. The megalithic men knew the art of hunting and cultivation of grains as tusks and grains have been found in their burial places. They had iron swords and iron axes which may have had a ritualistic significance and which also illustrate that the forests were penetrable to them. The sepulchres contain pottery, beads and other implements. The menhirs found by Sen Gupta on the Cardamom hills and in Komalapparathanadu in Cochin were ornamented by a circular chain or leaf pattern drawing at the rim. The burial site discovered in 1963 on the Periyar river contained terracotta figurines which suggest that magical practices were evolved in a crude primitive form of worship. These figurines included those of the males having beard and some of the other sex in worshipping posture, a pyriform jar with a round collared rim, straight shoulder , globular profile and tapering to the truncated round base. The rock-cut caves with pre-historic monuments in structure, orientation and contents bear evidence to their sepulchral character though the local tradition sometimes ascribed them as the abode of Buddhist and Jain monks, but no object found in them has any remote connection with the Buddhist form or worship. Neither the theory of Vedic nor of Buddhist origin, has been accepted by scholars. It is possible that at a later period some of the caves might have been dwelling places or retreats of Buddhist and other monks. The burials kept in rock-cut chamber caves are something peculiar to Kerala unlike the urn burial sites which fall in line with those from other parts of South India with some minor variations.[34] "This burial mode was practised in the pre-dominantly lateritic coastal plains. Even in the outskirts of Calicut some rock-cut chambers were found accidentally while quarrying the lateritic rock. The chambers were above 6 ft. high from the floor. Pots and iron implements

34. Ancient India No. (1952) Excavation by B.K. Thaper.

were found inside the chambers. Apart from this, regular investigation has been done and a fairly good picture of the architectural set up and funerary contents has now emerged. Many have only one or two chambers, but Eyyal caves are multichambered. They have stepped open court leading to a chamber, circular or rectangular with stone benches on either side and also a central pillar. The roofs of the chambers are usually domical. The benches, the pillar, the top opening are variable features. There are single, double and triple-chambered caves. Some good work in these was done at Porkalam near Kunnamkulam".[35] The rock-cut caves of Kerala are according to Sarma, the burial tombs of the megalithic people whose religion comprised a belief in the continuance of life for the departed in the tomb.[36] The disposal of the dead by burial is of considerable antiquity as gleaned from works like the *Tolkkapium*, the *Poruladhikaram*, the *Manimekhala* etc. In the view of Frazer, the practice of placing stones over the corpse may have for its origin fear against the return of the ghosts. Graves are provided with mounds, tomb stones of enclosures in order to keep the dead from returning to their old haunts.[37] However though no systematic investigation was attempted to study the megalithic monuments of Kerala, the megalithic type of monuments so far discovered serve to give us a faint though not a fuller picture of the megalithic people, their habitational equipment, housing, religion, etc. The megalithic habitation sites should be studied more intensively to know more about the cultural sequence and material content.

Appendix II is an attempt to catalogue the megalithic monuments so far brought to light in Kerala.

II EARLY INHABITANTS OF KERALA

The common characteristics which fuse all the races of men into a homogeneous single biological unit is an undisputed fact accepted by all men of science. Apart from the apparent dissimilarities in skin colour, stature, occipital structure, character

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35. Archaeological Excavations in Kerala—Dr. K.V. Raman, Souvenir—Indian History Congress, 1976, p.7.
36. History Congress 1976, p.7, Rock-cut caves in Kerala—Ancient India, 1956, No. XII.
37. Kerala and Her People—L.A. Krishna Iyer, 1961, p.24.

of the hair and other chemical constituents of the blood, deeper similarities are there uniting all men into one biologicl species. The differences may be due to many a factor. Marriage, notions of beauty etc. are cited as the causes for the segregation of one race from another. Nature has also a predominant role to play. We cannot for certain say how mankind gradually became divided. The investigators of human race have attributed it to anatomy or some such phenomenon in physiology. But the fact is that once the differences arise they become more or less stabilized in course of time. It is a well acknowledged fact that civilization of a country is built up by the various communities and races that comprise the social unit and when viewed from the origin and migration of these communities and races on the basis of a study of biological characteristics it evidently pinpoints to the history of civilization. Anthropologists have adopted their own methodology to study the physical characteristics of the people of India. Risely who took up the study in the closing years of the 19th century noted that there were 2,378 main Castes among the Hindus in India[38]. We know for certain that this number might have undergone profound changes during these 80 years. The communities usually restrict marriage to their own group. In practice marriage is confined to even smaller groups so that these are several times more than the number of castes. The Non-Hindus in India like the Muslims, Christians, Parsis and many other tribal groups, limit marriages to their own respective communities. The respective samples of these mating groups have been studied on the basis of the science of physical anthropology. The Biological Survey of the physical characteristics of the people in Kerala conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India reveal the following categories among the people of Kerala. The Survey in Kerala conducted on the basis of the population as per the 1951 census records that out of a population of nearly 14 millions, the Scheduled Castes constitute only one per cent. In the survey 23 communities were represented among whom were 18 tribes, 4 castes and 1 formed by the white Jews (22 only).

Short stature is the distinguishing feature among all commu-

38. The people of India, Calcutta, 1915.

nities. White Jews and *Sambavan* tend to be small. The majority of the people are dolichocephalic, but the *Sambavan* caste is mesocephalic and so are the *Parayan* and *Malampantaram* as well as the *Paliyan* tribe. *Pulayans* have an equal distribution of dolichocephal and mesocephal. More than 50 per cent of the noses are mesorrhine, though there are striking exceptions. Broad noses of chamaerrhine character are seen among the following castes: *Nayadi* 41% (5% hyperchamaerrhine) *Sambavan* 52% *Parayan* 33% and the following tribes: *Paniyan* 59% (and 6% hyperchamaerrhine). *Thandan, Ullatan* 77%, *Malamkuravan* 80% *Muthuvan* 77% *Malavetan* 76%. *Malapulayan* 54%, *Pulayan* 56%, *Malayarayan* 59% and *Kanikkar* 59%. The Survey revealed that the tribes bearing the name of *Vettakurumba* and *Ezhava* are of short statured, dolichocephalic and mesocephalic. The Nayar and (67%) Nambouthiri (55%), the two very important castes in Kerala were also subjected to the study. As revealed from the survey the Nayar tend to be above medium in stature, dolichocephalic and mesorrhine. Nambouthiris are below medium, dolichocephalic and mesorrhine. The most outstanding fact brought out by the survey was that the people of Kerala are short or medium statured, long headed and with medium broad noses. In this connection an interesting fact brought out by Dr. V. S. Guha and Dr. U. R. Ehrenfels deserves special notice. They observed curly hair among the *Kadars* of Kerala. Sickle cells have also been observed in the blood of some population here. Thus they arrived at the conclusion that these physical characteristics point to the fact that there is remnant of a Negrito population perhaps comparable to Negrito population of the Andaman Islands. Of course Dr. S. S. Sircar and others have challenged this observation. They are of the view that the West Coast of India was subject to small infiltration of people of African origin and that is the main cause for the Negroid characteistic observed. However the evidence regarding Negrito strain is too meagre at present.

The overall picture which emerges from the survey is that the major portion of Kerala seems to be inhabited by a short stature mesocephalic and dolichocephalic mesorrhine population. However the size of the sample being very small it would be unfair to reach major conclusions on this basis. It is obvious

that like the races of India there are areas in the State inhabited by the short, medium statured, dolichocephalic and mesorrhine population. This distinctive group has been given different names by different authors. It is the Dravidian according to Risley, Proto-Austroloids according to Guha, Proto-Austroloids to the Pithecanthropus according to Ruggles Gates, number of Dravidian according to Haddon, Nishada according to Chand and Weddids and the most primitive racial stratum according to Eickstedt.

Kerala is styled as a "microcopm for India" in the sense that it is an ethnological museum. The Negrito element is pointed out as the remnant of the earliest racial strain in the population of the Kerala like South India. The *Kadars*, the *Kanikkars*, the *Malampantarams*, the *Ulladars*, the *Uralees* and the *Paniyas* etc. still represent the Negrito type. The Negritos, in course of time came to be replaced by Proto-Austroloids. According to D. N. Majumdar the Proto-Australoids were a neolithic people at the time the Dravidians were building up a city civilisation on the Indus Valley. The distinguishing features of the Proto-Australoids like long head, flat nose and dark skin are still seen in tribes like *Irulans, Kurichiyas, Karimpalans, Malayarayans* etc. The characteristics of the Mediterranean who subsequently superseded the Proto-Australoids is believed to form the main element in the Dravidian population of South India. There is a section of the scholars who believed that these Mediterranean people[39] really represent the Dravidian civilization of the south. D. N. Majumdar has observed: The Mediterraneans must have been matriarchal and none of the Proto-Australoid tribes except those who have been influenced by the dominant matriarchal people of Malabar, are matriarchal or were so in the

39. Hornell pointed out that the broad—headed fishing castes of the South—West and South—East coasts of India bear close resemblance with the occurrence of broad—headed men along so many coastal stretches in West and South—West Europe connected with early maritime trade (British Association, Proceedings Liverpool, 1923). The duodecimal system of notation upto 100 of the language of Minicoy and Laccadive Islands represents an unattainable mathematical idea and Slater thinks that the nearest possible source of its adoption is from Mesopotamian or Sumerian or Chaldean origin (The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture, p. 45, Madras, 1982).

proto-historic times". The Aryan Epoch in North India jettisoned the Dravidians of the Indus Valley who migrated to South India and joined their kinsmen. The Nayars, the Ezhavas, the Vellalas etc. are believed to represent this Dravidian element in the population. The persons of Negrito strain in the population of Kerala was first noticed by anthropologists like Preuss, Baddon and Sergi. The labours of Lapicque noticed the existence of *Une race Negri primitive* among them. Considerable light was thrown on the problem by Hutton, Guha and L. A. Krishna Iyer. The Appendix I to the 1931 Census Report and the Travancore Tribes and Castes throw a wealth of information on the aborginal population in the State. Among those who have enriched the anthropological literature may be mentioned Walchmidt, Cipriami, Eickstedt, Ruggles Gates, Eileen Macfarlane, Mandelbaum and Emeneau. Hutton observed: "In the Kadars and the Uralees of the extreme south occasional individuals with frizzly hair are very suggestive of the Negrito race.

The Uralees seem to suggest the Negrito as much as the Kadar does: the height of the men is about 5 feet and hair is very curly, but is also harsh and in some individuals crisp and kinky. The features suggest that the basic type is Proto-Australoid with some Negrito admixture and perhaps Mediterranean. Australoid features in varying degrees besides some evidence of Negrito ancestry was noted by Ruggles Gates among the *Kanikkars*, the *Uralees* and the *Kurumbas*. Guha observed frizzly hair among the *Kadars*. The observation of Guha is as follows: "Though the mean cephalic index of the *Kadars* was dolichocephalic, among individuals, with frizzly hair, there was a marked tendency for a rise in the index to mesorhiny, as shown by two individuals having 77.34 and 77.29 as the value of their index, which indicates that the basis of the Negrito type was brachycephalic or at least Meso as among the Semangs, but that large admixture with the primitive dolichocephalic race affected the general shape of the head". L. A. Krishna Iyer who conducted an Anthropometric survey of the Travancore tribes observed as follows: "The value of the cephalic index goes to confirm the view that "the basis of the Negrito race was brachycephalic, or at least meso as among the Semangs, but that large admixture with the primitive dolichocephalic race

affected the general shape of the head". They are surrounded by such "doleph" tribes as the *Malayarayans*, the *Ullatans*, and *Uralees*. The Semangs have short hair, dark complexion, and medium head not unlike the Kadars in general appearance." V.K. Chatterji and G.D. Kumar who measured 125 *Uralees* in 1956 found that mesorhiny was the predominant type among them, which points a Negrito strain in the aborginal population in Kerala. In 1957 a team headed by S. S. Sircar, of the Calcutta University made an exhaustive inquiry of the *Kadars* and inferred that the Negrito strain is noticeable among the Kadars. Earlier D. N. Majumdar in his 'Races and Cultures of India' pointed out that there was no weighty evidence in support of a Negrito stock in India. It is observed by Deka and others that Negro slaves were imported into India since very early times and that frizzly hair cannot form the basic Negrito strain among the *Kadars*.[40]. In view of the above facts, it is assumed that there is a Negrito strain in the aboriginal population of Kerala and to the fact that Kanikkars, the *Malapantarams*, the *Vizhavans*, *the Pulayas*, the *Parayas* the *Nayadis*, the *Paniyans* and other Scheduled Castes and Tribes formed the first inhabitants of Kerala. An examination of the archaeological discoveries gives some inkling into the kind of people who occupied Kerala in pre-historic epoch. It is contended by some archaeologists that Kerala provides ample evidence to illustrate a neolithic phase of culture. L. A. Krishna Iyer remarks: it appears to have been resorted to from very early times to neolithic types by a race who were mighty hunters like the Malapantarams like the *Veddas* of Ceylon. The *Malapantarams* afford the example of one of the earliest inhabitants of Kerala".[41]

The Negrito might have been replaced at an early period of history by the Australoid who formed one of the major elements in the aboriginal population of India. Most of the Indian Castes and Tribes have a biochemical index of two and below. But the biochemical index of the *Kanikkars* (0.54), *Pulayas* (0.78), *Urali* (0.98) and the *Kadars* (0.62) is below one. Thus Kerala's

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40. However there is no historical basis for the hypothesis of Negro infiltration though Negro slaves were imported in Malabar during the 14th century by the Muslims and the Portuguese.

41. Social History of Kerala Vol. I. p. 39.

proto-Australoid element has a biochemical index less than one and tallies with those of other tribes elsewhere in India. Ruggles Gates feels that the fringes of at least many Indian tribes have been in contact with each other and the Dravidian population for at least three million years and that there was early infiltration in North and Central Asia by settlers of early Aryan origin. These long contacts have resulted in the toning of Austroloid characters.

B.G. Gokhale points out thus:- "The civilisation of India is a growth of centuries, a mighty adventure in which many races and religions co-operated. The common practice of worshipping the Ficus tree may be traced to the Negrito stage in its origin. Ideas of totemism, the phallic symbol, notions of future life and traits of magic like the removal of the evil eye, zomorphic deities, the idea of creation of the world from the egg, the idea of the avatar and lunar calendar may be assumed to be gifts of the Proto-Australoids. To the Mediterraneans may be ascribed the cult of Siva and Sakti, Kartikeya, Ganesh, Hanuman, the idea of a god of youth like Krishna, and the notion of prohibited degrees of marriage. Of the materials which constitute the basic elements in the religious rituals, turmeric and Vermilion originated in the Proto-Australoid stage, and leaves, flowers, fruits and water are the contributions of the Mediterranean phase. The Aryans incorporated the idea to an immutable cosmic law (Rita) and the ritual of sacrifice is quite distinct from the prevailing non-Aryan custom. Hinduism thus grew up, a repository of diverse ideas and ideals by which it became more a way of life than a form of thought. The synthesis of trends of thought and patterns of outlook created a common set of ideals which are actively practised, or subscribed to by the greater part of humanity".[42]

The Negrito element which was the earliest racial strain in the population of Kerala is represented by the *Uralees* and *Paniyas* of Wynad, the *Kadars* in the Parambikulam and neighbouring forests and the *Muthuvas* found chiefly in the Devikulam area. The Proto-Australoids are represented in the tribes of the *Kurichiyas* of Wynad and the *Mulla Kurumbas*.

42. Quoted in Social History of Kerala Vol. 1, p.8. L.A. Krishna Iyer, Madras, 1968.

The shamanastic practices of *Pulavas* and other scheduled castes link them with a pre-Dravidian or pre-Aryan magical culture. The Dravidians are represented by Nayar, Vellalas, Ezhavas etc. As observed by K. M. Panikkar the Nayars were not a caste, but a race[43] for many of the customs and traditions such as marriage, inheritance, art of warfare, serpent worship, ancestor worship, art forms, etc. distinguished them from other Malayali population. George Woodcock writes "that by the time the Brahmins arrived towards the end of the first millennium B. C. the Nayars were the rulers. The Chera Kings the first known rulers of Kerala, were by origin of Nayar, not Kshatriya caste, as is clearly shown by their being classes in the Sanskrit epics as of degenerate race, outside the recognised caste system".[44] The Nayars are Dravidians even though they display differences of temperament and custom from their Tamil and Mysorean neighbours of similar ancestry. These differences arose from the ways of life which the various groups have followed since the mighty Western Ghats divided them more than 2000 years ago. The Nayars are compared with the Elynars of the *Silappadhikaram* who were originally a marauding warrior people of the Dravidian origin. The Ezhavas represent a staggered and later migration possibly from Ceylon. The Nampoothiris represent the spearhead of Aryan penetration[45]. There is not much basis in the argument based on Parasurama that the Nampoothiris represent the first settlers of Kerala for they are physically a different type from other Malayalis. However it is irrefutable that there has been a considerable admixture of Aryan and Dravidian strains in the case of the Nayar, Kshatriyas and Ambalavasis communities because of the socially sanctioned practice of Nampoothiri male marrying women of these castes. Hypergamy tends to occur where the structural gulf is narrow. It may be noted here that all marriages of Nayars were hypergamous. In the traditional literature of India hypergamous (anuloma)

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43. History of Kerala, Annamalainagar, 1960 p. 10.

44. A. Portrait of the Malabar Coast, London, 1967 p. 68.

45. E.M.S. Namboothiripad claims that the Nayars and the Nampoothiri belong to the same race and became divided as a result of the caste system based on land holdings. (Kerala Society and Politics, 1984, New Delhi).

marriages are permitted while hypogamous (Pratiloma) marriages are prohibited; unlike the present legislation which validates all inter-caste marriages whether of the hypergamous or hypogamous kind. In spite of the intermingling of Syrian and Arabic blood in the case of the Christian and Muslim communities, the basic stock remains almost indigenous.

In considering the castes from a historical point of view, we may assume that the lowest represent the oldest inhabitants of the land and the highest the recent comers.

III ANCIENT PERIOD

Kerala between 10th Century B.C. and 5th Century A.D.

The archaeological records[46] and the early Sangam literature[47] assist us to trace the history of Kerala to the tenth century B.C. The megalithic monuments so far excavated have no parallel to their counterparts elsewhere in Asia and are according to archaeologists later in point of time. The stray and casual reference to these monuments in the early Sangam literature prompts archaeologists and historians to assign a time span between tenth century B. C. and fifth century A.D. for the early settlers who left their footprints on the shores of Kerala.

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46. Unfortunately the monuments so far discovered in Kerala do not enable us to give an account of a continuity of lithic culture from Paleolithic to Neolithic and from Neolithic to Megalithic. There is very little evidence of the old stone age and new stone age in Kerala, probably because no search has been made. Recent researchers of the Deccan College, Poona have identified some probable sites of Paleolithic settlements in different parts of Palghat and many stray finds of Neolithic tools have also been discovered by researches of the Calicut University along the river beds. However no attempt has been made by them for a firm dating of these monuments. But many megaliths have been reported from Kerala after the first discovery of it by Babington in 1823. Further the cumulative evidence suggested by modern archaeological studies reveal that till the second millennium B.C. the settled Neolithic way of life, had diffused to most areas in South India except Kerala, where forests were too thick to be controlled with Neolithic tools.

47. The Sangam classics are innately poor historiographic material to identify the early historic culture—differentiate in Tamilnad. These classics deal with the activities of small local chieftains and patrons in the different parts of

Kerala in this epoch of history formed an integral part of the socio-cultural unit called Tamilakam. The whole of the country lying south of the central plateau of Asia was known as Jambudiva[48] or "The land of the Rose Apple Trees". In Jambudiva, the region south of the Vindhyas was called Dakshinapatha or The Southern Side[49] and the extreme south of the peninsula inhabited by Tamil people, was Tamilakam, the abode of Tamils. The limits of Tamilakam were from Venkata Hill[50] in the North to Kumari[51] and from the Bay of Bengal in the

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Tamilakam. The names of rulers are usually given with attributes or special titles. Excessive overlapping of names are quite common, the same names being successively repeated over generations. Archaeologists on co-ordinating their findings with the Sangam classics allot the period of 2 century A.D. to 5–6th century A.D. as the central age of these classics. Pathittupattu and Ettuttokai are the earliest known of these classics which are assigned to the third and fifth century A.D. The post-Sangam classics like Silappadikaram are dated to the 7th–8th century A.D. by archaeologists as revealed by the bronze, stucco and terracotta evidence at Kaverippattinam (K.V. Soundara Rajan, Journal of Indian History, Vol. XIV, Part II, p. 671).

However for the historian these classics are the only available written sources to reconstruct the early history of Cheras, Pandyas and Cholas. Dealing with the importance of these works K.A. Nilakanta Sastri observes: "The most striking feature in the picture is its composite character, it is the unmistakable result of the blend of two originally distinct cultures best described as Tamilian and Aryan, but it is by no means easy now to distinguish the original elements in their purity" (A History of South India, p. 129).

48. Some authors call "Jambudipa" as Navalam on Sambu Divu. This island one of the first land–formations on either side of the equator was bounded on the north by the Vindhya mountains and touched Australia, Africa and China on the South, West and East respectively. In Manimekalai XVII 62 "near Tamilaham is Sambu Island"; Silappathikaram III 37. . "In the billowy ocean–girt world to the knowledge of the Tamil land; St. Appar II 62" the dwellers in the 'beautiful big island of Naval–Eugernia Jamboland Manimekhalai XI. 107. "In the very large island called Jambu divu"; Perum-Kathai Cants, II. XVIII: 76 and V. III. 183 "in the well watered region of Naval divu: Pathittupattu II Pathikam "for the prosperity of Tamilaham hedged round the billowy sea".

49. Early History of the Dekhan, p.1, also Mc. Crindle's Periplus, p. 124.

50. Tirupathi of the present day. The hill of Tiramal and the bangled kumari or or virgin Goddess. Silappathikaram VIII. 1–12.

51. Cape Comorin.

East to the Arabian Sea in the West. This tract covered the three ancient Tamil kingdoms of Pandya, Chola, and Chera (including Thondai and Kongu) and the territories of their auxiliary chieftains. Tamil was the spoken language of the entire Tamilakam[52]. The Tamilakam was bifurcated into Sen (classical) Tamil and *Kodum* (vulgarized) Tamil land. According to an Old *Venba*[53] there were twelve regions in *Tamilakam*. They were: "Pandi, Kuttanadu, Kudanadu, Karkkanadu, Veenadu, Pulinadu, Pantinadu, Aruvanadu, North Aruvanadu, Citanadu, Malanadu, and Punalnadu". Tolkappiyar endorses this conventional classification of Tamilakam when he lays down Centamil Ceeruta pannirunilam' (the twelve regions speaking centamil[54]). Panambaranar, the contemporary of Tolkappiyar, in his prefactory verse tells "that the land of Good Tamil is the area between the Venkata hill in the north and the Kumari in the South" [55]. Of the various *Nads* or provinces into which old Tamilakam was comprised, nothing certain can be said as the accounts given by Sangam literature commentators and the information available in the Periplus and in the works of Pliny and Ptolemy are conflicting and enigmatic.

The old grammer *Tolkappium* assigns five nadus of *Kodum Tamil* as forming *Chera*. They ran from north to south in order as *Pooli, kundam,* kuttam, *karka* and Ven. The very description of the lands as conveyed to us by these names convey the entire

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52. Malayalam had not formed into a separate dialect at this time. The inscriptional evidence relating to Malayalam pin-points to the fact that the language began to show its individual characteristics from the 9th century. The language in the Syrian-Christian inscriptions of the 8th and 9th centuries is closely akin to *Sen* Tamil.

53. Venba is one of the most distinct and difficult of Tamil metres. The first line of the couplet consists of four feet and the second with three, the last foot being a peculiar kind of incomplete foot.

54 The Kongu country, M. Arokiaswami, Madras, 1956, p. 3. *Tolkappiyam, the* earliest extant grammatical work in Tamil, in the Chapter on *Sol* (Words) in *Sutra* 400 makes a classification of the thirteen *nadus* (divisions) of ancient *Tamilakam.*

55 Panambaranar's Payiram — quoted by M. Raghava Aiyangar in some Aspects of Kerala and Tamil Literature, Part I, p. 3, Trivendrum, 1948.

tract in the present State of Kerala with only slight geographical variations. The learned author classifies the land as the sandy *(Pooli)*, the rocky *(karka)* and the bamboo *(ven)* while kudam refers etymologically to the Western region and Kuttam to a land of lakes.[56].

The *Pooli*[57] or sandy tract extended probably from the banks of Agalappuzha to the mouth of Ponnani river. *Kudam* comprised the tract between the mouth of the Ponnani river and

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56 Logan, the author of the Malabar Manual determines the territorial limits of Chera in the period from the first to the third century A.D. from available sources as follows: —

North — Honore or Konavar
South — Quilon or S. Kollam
East — Karur and the Cauvery at that point
West — The sea

Logan, Malabar I. p 241. Logan has included Wynad and Punnad in the *Kongu Desam*. It may be noted here that some historical writers often identified Chera with Kongu. Prof. Wilson H. H. referring to *Kongudesarajakkal* (a manuscript of the 17th century like *Keralolpathi* bearing on the early history of the *Kongudesam)* in his catalogue of Mackenzie Manuscripts describes it as "an account of the princes of the country known as Konga or Cera, one of the three principal divisions with Cola and Pandya of the eastern half of the southern portion of the Peninsula" (Quoted by M. Arokiaswami in Kongu Country, Madras University Historical Series No. 22, P. 5—6). The author of the 'History of Travancore' also says that the two countries were assumed as one and the same (Shangoony Menon, History of Travancore 1872, Madras, p. 30—31). Likewise Dr. Francis Buchanan in his "Journey through the Coast of Malabar, Madras and Souths Canara treat of Chera and Kongu as one. The confusion arose according to Arokiaswami from the English translation of *Kongudesarajakkal* in the India Office Library, London, (The Kongu Country, P. 11—12). B.A. Salatore also contradicts Sturrock for his statement in the *South Canara Manual* that it is erroneous to assume that" South Canara must certainly at one time have formed part of Kerala or Chera" (*South Canara Manual*, p. 54). *Ancient Karnataka*, Poona, 1930. p 9

57. Logan in his Malabar Manual says that the names *Pooli Nadu* and *Kuda Nadu* survived upto the Mysorean Interlude in Malabar in the latter part of the 18th century, though slighly altered into Payanad, Polanad and Kutnad. Payanad comprised of 9 *amshams* surrounding Calicut. Kutnad consisted of 24 *amshams* in the modern Taluk of Ponnani, pp. 647 to 666. Profuse references are there in the "Reports of A Joint Commission of Bengal and Bombay appointed to inspect into the state and condition of the province of Malabar in the years 1792 and 1793" (Madras, 1862).

southern most mouth of the Periyar near Cochin. *Kudam* or the land of lakes consisted of all territories around Kottayam, Alleppey and Quilon. South of *Kudam* was *Ven* more aptly named as *Ven-nad*[58], which stretched upto very near Cape Comorin. The land east of *Kudam* was called *Karka* or the rocky region[59]. (See Map I Kanakasabhai, p. 14). However, these are the limits of a later period and cannot define the old *Cheramandalam* for Karur is much to the north of Pulney. There are grounds for supporting that the Cheramandalam included once the present Karnataka, Coimbatore and Salem, the old Tondainad and the present south Malabar and Cochin. A tradition places the tri-junctional point of the Pandya, Chola and Chera kingdoms on the banks of Caraypottannur, a small river entering the Cauvery. The various principal towns assigned to Chera are Karur, Avanashy, Salem, Tiroonagary in Tinnevelly, with places on the West Coast[60].

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58. The Ven-nad according to some is the land of bamboos. The low hills and valleys in this region were covered with luxuriant forests of bamboo. Some, others say Ven-nad stands for "the land of Vels" (Chieftains).

59. Boundary Stanza by Auveiyaur "The northern most place is Pulney. The most east is Shengode. On the west is Cozhicood. The shore of the sea is on the south. Say some eighty cauthams make the boundary of the Chera country Shengode is modern Shencottah in Tinnevelly. Cozhicood is the modern Calicut. Pulney in the stanza probably refers to the river Perar or Bharathapuzha. The geographical stanza on Chera represents the eastern boundary of the Chera as Tenkasi. This included a considerable portion of the Tinnevelly Taluk of Tenkasi, including Courtallam itself. It is quite possible that Tenkasi may at some time or another have come into the possession of Travancore, but inscriptions prove that in the 15th and 16th centuries at least it belonged to the Pandyas. (A History of Tinnevelly Bishop R. Caldwell, Asian Eductional Services, New Delhi, 1982, p. 25). An inscription on the inner stone wall of the (Shermadevy) Chera Maha-Devi Pagoda, dated Malayalam or Kollum year 614 (1439 A.D.) commemorating a grant by the Travancore king Chera Oodiah Marthanda Vurmah to the pagoda at that place while the grantor was residing in the Chera Maha-Devi Palace.

60. The *Keralolpathi* mentions that Malainadu was divided into four parts, namely: (1) The Tulu kingdom extending from Gokarnam to Perumpuzha i.e., the Canaras (north and south very nearly at present defined). (2) The Kupaka kingdom extending from Perumpuzha to Puduppattanam, the seat of Tekkankur (Southern Regent) of the North Kolathiri dynasty situated on the Kotta river.

All authorities concur that all the kingdoms of the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas formed the land of Tamilakam in the early centuries of the Christian Era.

*During the Sangam Age. Kerala was under the political control of three powers viz., the Mushikas in the north with their capital first at Ezhimala (Mount Eli) later at Mozhipeyar Desom or Pazhi; the Cheras in the middle with headquarters at Vanchi. Tondi and Karur respectively and the **Ays** in the south with capital at Aykudi in Pothiyil hills.*

IV EZHIMALA KINGDOM

A study of the Sangam literature shows the early history of the Mushika country surrounding the *Eli* hills. Poozhinad or North Malabar and the Kasargode regions were deemed to be comprised in *Ezhimalainad* or Ezhimala kingdom. The country got its name from the location of the capital at Ezhimala often referred to in works like *Akananuru, Purananuru, Nattinai, Pattupattu,* , and *Kurumthokai.*

The Identification of Ezhimalai

The Sangam works describe *Ezhimalai* in the sense "elevated hill". Akam(349) mentions of "the tusker that ate the fiery blossoms of the straight, black-stemmed Vegai tree on the slopes of Nannan's Ezhimala—like the snake that crawls on a rock". Mamulanar refers to the guarded mansions of the city on hill top. Kirattanar speaks of "the cloud—crawling Ezhil hills" (Akam 340). In course of time *Ezhimalai* became *Eli mala* and it was retained in Sanskrit as *Elisaila* or sanskritised as *Mushikaparvatta. Kerala Mahatmyam* refers to Ezhimalai as *Saptasaila.* The Muslim travellers of the Medieval period referred to it as *Eli,* and later the European accounts as *Mount D' Eli* or *Mount Eli.* Marco Polo describes (*D' Eli, Heili*) the

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i.e. North Malabar as at present defined less the southern half of Kurumbranadu Taluk, (3) the Kerala kingdom extending from Pudupattanam to Kannetti, that is, South Malabar, including the southern half of the Kurumbranadu Taluk; and (4) the Muzhika kingdom extending from Kannetti to Cape Comorin, that, South Travancore.

surrounding country under the name of the kingdom of *Eli*. Gasper Correa says that Vasco da Gama's pilots foretold that "the first land to be sighted would be a great mountain which is on the Coast of India in the kingdom of Cannanore which the people of the country in their language call the mountain Delielly and they call it of the rat, and they call it Mount Delay because in this mountain there were so many rats that they never could make a village there" (The Three voyages of Vasco da Gama) (Hakluyt Series, P. 145). According to Gundert the name should be spelt as *Ezhi*. He cites that Kolathiri is referred as *Ezhi Perumal* in *Kerala Ulpathi*. European travellers speak of *Eli Kovilagam* meaning palace near Mount Deli (Yule's Marco Polo). The Arab history of Malabar mentions a state called Hili Maraive. The name Maraivi is preserved in Madavi or Madayi (Innes, Malabar Gazetteer, p. 423). K. P. P. Menon suggests that the name is variation of *Azhi-mala* meaning "the mount near the sea" (History of Kerala, Vol. I p. 13—16). The etymology of the name is confused by many authors. The probability is that *Elil* (high) of the Sangam works became corrupted as *Ezhu* which means 'seven' in the Dravidian languages. From this the form *Saptasailam* was coined later by Sanskrit authors. The *Ezhil* was corrupted into *Eli* which in Malayalam means a rat. *Mushika* is a synonym of rat. The *Mushikavamsa* gives alternate forms of Eli and Mushika The poem indicates its location "as jutting into the Arabian sea". It also refers to a township called *Acalapattanam* situated near the hill and also that the river called *Killa* should be crossed to reach the hillock. The poem also incorporates another fictitious story to account for the name *Elimala* viz. the story of the huge rat and its subsequent transformation into the king of the mountain[61].

61. The founder king of the Mushika dynasty was the son of a queen of Mahismati whose husband was killed by the legendary hero, Parasurama. She escaped from slaughter at the hands of Parasurama and she was persuaded by her family perceptor not to commit suicide but to follow him to the south where they entered a cave in the Eli mountain. There a rat having the size of a huge elephant tried to devour her but was killed by the fire of her anger. Its soul appeared in the form of the king of the hill and explained to her the circumstances that led to his transformation as a rat and promised her to look after her child in the womb. The queen soon gave birth to a son and later when he came of

Mushika Kingdom

The name Mushika as applied to a country or its inhabitants is referred to in many literary works of hoary past and in inscriptions. The names have been differently spelt by early writers; some as **Mushaka** and others as *Mushika*. The location of the country referred by the name is also not definite. Some authorities locate the situation somewhere in Central India near the Vindhyas while others in South India.

Inscriptions

An inscription[62] of king Kharavela of Kalinga (173—160 B.C.) refers to Mushika. The city by name Mushikanagara situated near the river Kanhabenna (Krishna in South India) is mentioned in this inscription. The Mushikas had at that time established themselves in the Vindhya Region to the west of Kalinga and were grouped along with Hehayas[63] and Cedis. The inscription describes an endeavour at uprooting *Mushikas* from their original home[64]. Eventhough the Mushikas held on for some time, till Magadha king is said to have forced them to leave tne territory. The details given in this inscription are supported by the accounts in the *Mushikavamsakavya* of Atula also[65]. The Mahakuta pillar inscription[66] (601—2 A. D.) of the Western Chalukya king Mangalesa Ranavikranta (597—608 A.D.) records that *Kirtivarman* (566—97 A.D.) elder brother of Ranavikranta conquered the kings of Kerala, Ganga, Musaka, Pandya and Chola in South India. It can therefore be

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age Parasurama consecrated him as the king (*Pattabhisekam)* of Eli hill by pouring water from a *ghata* (pot). It was thus that the king acquired the title of *Ramaghatamusika).*

62. Epigraphia Indica XX, pp. 2.

63. B.A. Salatore in *Ancient Karnataka* refers to the "ruler of the Haihaya tribes with his capital at Mahismati, p. 10. 1936, Poona.

64. Commentary of the text by Banerjee and Jayaswal, Journal of the Bihar Research Society, Vol. I. pp. 425—507, 1917.

65. Vide reference supra.

66. See 'A History of Musikavamsa' Dr. N. P. Unni, opp. cited, p. 4

inferred that before 7th century A.D. the *Mushikas* seems to have migrated to the West from their original home in the Vindhya region. All authorities agree that the *Mushikas* established themselves over a small region surrounding *Eli* hill after their overthrow from Central India. A prince of the original *Mushika* line by name *Ramaghata* or *Iramakuda* was installed as king. The lineage of kings was known as *Mushikesvaras* or *Ramaghtamuvar*[67]. The *Eli* hill was included in the new country of *Iramakudam* and Kolam was the capital.

Classical accounts

The *Mushikavamsa* of Atula refers the seizure of the Mushika country by a king of Magadha named Suvarnan. The identity of the king is a matter of controversy among scholars.

The work makes mention of *Mahismati* as the capital of *Mushikas* who considered themselves as Hehayas. One version of Natyasutra locates the kingdom as included under the Kalingas[68]. The Vishnupurana edition of the Royal Asiatic Society[69] mentions *Mushikas* along with *strirajyas* and other kingdoms of Vindhya region. Another version of the same work speaks of them along with the Southern Kingdoms. The *Vayupurana, Markendeyapurana, Brahmandapurana, Padmapurana,* Mahabharatha, Harivamsa etc. place the territory as located in the neighbourhood of Chola, Pandya and Chera[70] kingdoms.

The *Mushikavamsa* refers the Mushikas as independent rulers along with Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas, having matrimonial alliances with them. Monier Williams explains that the term *Mushika* found in the Mahabharatha as the name of a people inhabiting Malabar coast between Quilon and Cape. K. P. Padmanabha Menon[71] and V. Nagamiah[72] subscribe to the view of Monier Williams. T. A. Gopinatha Rao observes[73].

67. South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. III, p.1.
68. Journal of the Bihar Research Society, p. 148
69. London, 1922, p. 169
70. For details see 'A History of Mushikavamsa', N.P. Unni, Trivandrum 1980, pp.2—5
71. History of Kerala, Vol. I, pp.2 and 35.
72. Travancore State Manual, Vol. I, pp. 223, 232.
73. T. A. S. II, Part I, 54—55

"In the medieval and later periods the country was split up into a large number of principalities; the chief among them seem to have been the Mushaka country belonging to the Kolathiris, the Kupakas of Kollam and the Venad kings of South Travancore. That part of Malabar north of Kollam and adjoining of Coimbatore and the Nilgiri districts and Mysore province appear to have been known as Kerala". This statement of Rao occurs in the course of his interpretation of the inscription of Ravivarma Samgramadhira. Elsewhere in the same volume while dealing with the study of *Mushika Vamsa* he quotes from *Keralolpathi* thus "the limits of the Mushika kingdom extending from Kannetti to Cape Comorin, that is, South Travancore[74]. The confusion arose from his reliance on depending on the legendary account as given in the *Keralolpathy* it is well known that *Keralolpathi* has different versions. Dr. Gundert also committed[75] the same mistake. An interesting legend is narrated by him in defining the word *Musikakshatriyas* for which he gives the meaning "lower Kshatriyas that fled from Parasurama". In the version of the *Keralolpathi* printed at the Basel Mission Press, Mangalore[76] it is laid down that among the time-honoured divisions of *Parasuramakshetram* into Tuluva, *Mushika*, Kerala and Kupaka, the limits of *Mushika* are given as follows: "*Mushika* lay between Perumpuzha and Puthupattanam". In a learned article entitled "An Unidentified territory in South Inadia" K V. Subramonia Iyer[77] delineates beyond doubt that the location of the Mushaka kingdom was between Perumpuzha and Puthupattanam as gleaned from Atula's poem. According to him Kolam was undoubtedly the capital of Mushikas and the term Saptasaila corresponded to the *Eli* hill in Keralamahatmyam. *He has identified the term Ramaghata* with the Iramkudam as mentioned in Rajadhiraja's inscription. In short Kolathunad[78] region in North Kerala is established as the country of the Mushakas by the learned author.

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74. Ibid. p. 106

75 A Malayalam English Dictionary (2nd Edition) Kottayam. 1962. p. 775.

76. Keraloipathi, Mangalore, 1843.

77. Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, London. 1922. pp. 170—75.

78. It is only by the 14th centuary of the Christian Era the old Mushaka kingdom came to be known as Kolathiris.

Legendary Genealogy of Mushikas

Atula, the author of the *Mushikavamsa* traces the genealogy of the Mushika dynasty from the founder-king Ramaghata Mushika. Tradition has it that he was the son of queen Mahismati who escaped slaughter at the hands of Parasurama. She proceeded to the South and took her asylum in a cave in the *Eli* mountain The queen gave birth to a son who was later consecrated as the ruler of the region of Ezhimala by Parasurama. It is said that the imposing name of Ramaghatamushika was acquired on this account. His successors also used to affix Ramaghatamushika as a title. He appointed a minister by name Mahanavika, who was a member of the merchant community belonging to Mahismati—a city in central India founded by Mahismath, the fifth in descent from Hehaya. The minister is referred to in the work pointing out his various qualities.

The new king built his capital in a place known as Kolam. It was considered as the *Kularajadhani* — the residence of the Kings of the land. It is said that the Mushika line of rulers were referred to by the titles like *Kolabharata*, *Ramaghatamushika*, *Hehayesvara* and *Mushikesvara*. It is said that by the time Ramaghata established his Kingdom in the South at Kolam near Ezhimala, his patrimony at Mahismati was seized by the King of Magadha called Suvarman. Ramaghatamushika wanted to regain his patrimony as soon as he established himself in the South. Accordingly he set out to oppose the King of Magadha after consolidating his position in the South. He went to the North with his huge army and encamped at the foot of the Vindyas. He sent emissaries to the King of Magadha who refused to hand over his patrimony. In the fierce battle followed the King of Magadha was slain. He entered the palace of the Magadha King where he met his beautiful daughter Bhadrasena whom he married. The queen mother left the son of the departed King to the care of Ramaghatamushika and he consecrated the boy as the ruler of the Magadha. The Mushika king after his marriage with Bhadrasena occupied the Capital of Hehayas for sometime. Bhadrasena gave birth to two sons — Vatu and Nandana. The elder son, Vatu was crowned as the King of the Hehayas. Ramaghata soon returned to Ezhimala with his younger son

Nandana. He ruled over the Ezhimala Kingdom till he retired to the forests after consecrating Nandana in his place. The above is the account given by Atula in his immortal *Kavya* regarding the founder king of Ezhimala. It is pertinent to note that the term *Ramaghata* is used by the poet to indicate the name of the King as well as the title of sovereignty.

Ramaghata, a title and not a name

The identity of *Ramaghatamushika* with *Irama Kudamuvar* has been a subject of debate among scholars. In one of the inscriptions of the great Chola King Rajakesarivarman Rajadhiraja I, the term *Iramakudam* is referred[79] Dr. Hultzsch's translation of the inscription is as follows "He sent the undaunted king of Venadu to the country of heaven and destroyed in anger the three (kings) of the famous Iramakudam[80]" K.V. Subramonia Iyer explains "the word Iramakudam may be split up into either *Ira* and *Makudam* or *Irama* and *Kudam*. The first does not yield much sense. while the second admits of a better meaning ...In the latter case, the Sanskrit equivalents of the two words, of which the name is the compound, are *Rama* and *Ghata*. Hence Iramakudam of Rajadhiraja's inscription may answer to

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79 Iramakudam (Tamil), Rama-ghata (Skt.) was one of the principalities which centred round Mt. D'Eli, the *Musaka* hill or Eli-malai (rat-hill) and ruled over by the Musaka kings whose annals form the subject-matter of the *kavya* called *Musakavamsam* According to the legend recorded in this work, a certain Kshatriya prince, born and brought up in secret after Parasurama's great war on the Kshatriyas, was produced before Parasurama, when in the course of a sacrifice performed by him in Mount Eli, he was on the look out for a Ksatriya for performing a rite which was an essential part of the sacrifice and had to be performed only by Kshatriya This prince was afterwards made king of Musaka country by Parasurama who crowned him after an *abhiseka* with pots *(ghata, Kudam)* of water hence the name of the family, Rama-ghata, or *Iramakudam* in Tamil. A *Vatteluttu* record of the eleventh century in the neighbourhood of Eli-malai is dated in the fiftyninth regnal year of a Musaka king, Kandan Karivarman alias Ramakuda Muvar Tiruvadi, the inscription also mentions Rajendra-sola-samaiya senapati. Most probably this Muvar Tiruvadi was the ruler against whom Rajadhiraja's expedition was directed.

80. South Indian Inscriptions. Vol III, Part I No. 28. Also see K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's *Colas* quoted supra.

Ramaghata"[81]. Therefore the term as applied to a king is a mere figment of imagination connected with the story that Parasurama anointed the King by pouring potfuls of sacred water on his head *(ghatabhiseka)*. Further we can not consider that Ramaghata is anything more than a synonym, similar to Pallava, Chola or Pandya. It is not improbable that the name of the country was Kudam or Ramakudam as distinguishing it from Kudamalainadu, another southern territorial division."[82]

The meaning given to *muvar* occurring in *Iramakudamuvar* as three kings has been proved to be wrong by the discovery of later inscriptions from Kerala. Certain *Vattazethu* inscription found out by the South Indian Archaeological Survey from the precincts of Ezhimala in 1926 and 1930 and also from Tiruvattar, Kannapuram and Eramam in Taliparamba sheds fresh light on the problems. In one of the inscriptions the very term Muzhikendra whose name is given as *Iraman Cenmani* (Raman Jayamani) occurs[83]. That Ramakatamuvar is a hereditary title is proved by the occurrence of the same in the inscriptions of Eramam and Kannapuram[84].

With the discovery of the above inscriptions, the question that Ramaghata is a title and does not refer to the name of a king is settled once for all. Nandana was the immediate successor of Ramaghata – the founder king of the dynasty. He was an indolent king who entrusted the functions of the Government in the hands of the ministers and gave himself upto carnal pleasures.

There is a section of scholars who contend that this Nandana was the famous ruler, Nannan of Ezhimala who figures prominently in Sangam literature[85] and works on South Indian History. They

81 An unidentified territory of South India Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, Part II, p. 165.

82. Ibid., p. 167

83. Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy for 1920–30, Part II, p. 86. K. Maheswaran Nair in Epigraphia Malabarica (Trivandrum, 1972, pp 72--73)

84. See Re-interpretation in South Indian History, M G.S. Narayanan, Trivandrum, 1977, pp. 58–65.

85. *The Malaipadukadam* otherwise known as *Kuttarattuppadai* attributed to

argue that in the event, Ramaghata Musika the founder is only a legendary hero and the dynasty actually begins with Nannan[86]. According to the accounts in the Sangam classics, Nannan was killed by a Chera king by name Narmudicheral in the battle of Vakaipperumtural. This was to avenge the death of his army Chief Ay Eynian at the hands of Nannan's Commander, Minili. There was another king by the name of Nannan Utiyan ruling the locality. Atan Elini the ruler of Cellur is also mentioned by Tamil writers[87]. N.V. Krishna Warrier has suggested that the possible identification of the Musika king with the namesake mentioned in Sangam literature cannot be accepted as historical truth[88]. From a historical point of view, it is safe to conclude that Atula (11th Century A.D.), author of the Mushikavamsa relied more on traditions and fictions prevalent during his time to mould the history of Mushikas and there is no point in arguing that Nandana is a prototype of Nannan of the Sangam classics.[89]

Nannan of Ezhimalai

The ancient Tamil literature known to scholars as Sangam literature contains prolific reference to Nannan, the famous warlike chieftain of Ezhimalai in Poozhinad[90]. The period of

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poet Perum-kausikanar of Perunkunrur celebrates in 583 lines the achievements of the Chieftain Nannan as well as his ancestors and his court. There is reference to the Siva shrine in the Navirum hill in the kingdom of Nannan and also to the agricultural products, mountains and gardens found therein. Studies in Tamil Literature V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, SISWPS, Madras, 1983, pp. 36—37.

86. M. G. S. Narayanan, opp. cit. p. 190
87. Studies in Kerala History, Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, N.B.S. Kottayam, 1970, p. 47
88. Vijnanakairali, 6. pp. 555—56.
89. See Appendix—III for the legendary geneology of Mushika kings as given in the Mushikavamsa with critical examination.

90. Akananuru — 15, 44, 97, 142, 148, 152, 173, 181, 199, 208, 258, 349, 356, 392 and 396; Purananuru, 151, 154, 155, Nattinai, 265, 270, 391; Patittupattu 4, 10; Kuruntokai, 73, 292 A Chinese merchant, Wang-Ta-Yuan who visited many countries between 1300 and 1349 A.D. in his book *Tuo-i-chi-lie* gives accounts about important harbours among which Ezhimala also finds a place.

the early compositions of the classics coincides with the Maurya hegemony in North India. It is probable that the Mauryan invaders who reached the borders of Mysore might have encountered the megalith making tribes under their own chieftains who lived in the seclusion of their hill forts and controlled the destinies of the people of the surrounding country side[91]. Even in Asoka Edicts, mention of Keralaputra and Satyaputra together

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91. In the Sangam literature, there are several references to an invasion of the South by the Mauryas (called in Tamil Moriyar). The invasion is not considered as a figment of poetical imagination but as a fact of history by many historians. Taranath, the Tibetan historian records that Bindusara (296—273 B. C.) father of Asoka killed the kings and advisers of sixteen capitals thus extending his empire "from Sea to Sea" V. A. Smith in his "Early History of India", observes: "the invaders advanced as far South as Madura and the neighbouring parts of Tinnevelly district with "a great army" *Mamulanar's* two poems (Akam 251 and 281) *Paramkorranar's* verse (*Akam 69)* and Kallil *Athiraiyanar's* poem (Puram 175) give a connected account of this invasion (Kerala and Tamil Literature, M. Raghava Aiyangar, Trivandrum, p. 20). The Mauryas came to South with a certain warlike tribe called *Vadukar* as their vanguard. They came through a certain pass (Aruvamozhi?) in the Southern country. They finally reached the place called Podiyil hill. Another tribe known as *Kosar* is also referred in *Maduraikkanji* (lines 771—774). It clearly lays down that a host of young Kosars, the commander of which was the *Palaiyan Maran* (Mohur chieftain) were over thrown by the Chera King Senguttavan. The Kosars were warriors of the old Tamilakam who served all kings. M. Raghava Aiyangar (supra cited pp. 21—22) is of the view that the *Kosars* were the forces of the Pandyas stationed on the Podiyil hill under the command of Maran. According to the Ceylon chronicle *(Mahavamsa) Palaiyan—maran* dating back to a period before the Christian Era) who encountered the Mauryan forces was an ancestor of the *Palaiyan-maran* of the third Sangam period. References are there on the faithfulness and heroism of the *Kosars* in Avvaiyar's *Kurunthokai, Maduraikkanji.* The four divisions of the army were *ratha* (chariot) *gaja* (elephantry) *thuraga* (cavalry) and *patha* (army). The Pass referred in the Sangam Classics *(Araivaimoli)* is Aramboly of English nomen-clature because Mahendragiri *(Akam 28)* and Kallil *(Puram 175)* are situated in the old South Travancore. It is well known that Aruvamozhi was a general means of access into the old Chera country lying west of the Ghats and vice versa into the Pandya country (also see T.A.S. Vol. VI, p. 1 for details). Further history shows that it was through this Pass that "adverturous Pandyas, Cholas, Vijayanagara generals and Nayak Kings poured in from the other side of the Ghats, whenever the whim of conquest seized them or the lust of plunder tickled their cupidity". However certain historians disagree with the view that Mauryas ever invaded South India. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri observes: 'Let us note further that the poems contain no basis for the view often expressed that the Mauryas invaded South India and reached Podiya

There is another king by the name of Nannen Utiyan ruling the with Chola. Pandya and Tamraparni or Ceylon is about peoples and not kings. This probably suggests that during the time of Asoka the southern most tribes were emerging from the tribal status to civilisation. So Nannan of Ezhimala whose acts were glorified in golden words by his court poets, might have also been a later tribal Chief during this epoch in South Indian history.

Reference about Nannan is found in the Sangam classic — *Malaipadukadam* (I, 164). The theme of *Malaipadukadam* of Perunkausikanar otherwise known as *Kuttarattuppadai* centres round the mention by a dancer to another dancer to approach for reward the chief Vel Nannan Chey Nannan, who had lavished his generosity on the former. Besides other things the work describes Nannan's territory, its forests, hills and towns, the customs and habits of the people and their hospitality as well as Nannan's exploits and munificence. He is classified alongside the mountain chiefs like *Alumbi-Vel*. Nannan is called the Lord of *Muthiram*. *Vanvar* or "Celestials" was the term used in the Sangam literature to denote the tribes of the old Tamilakom. That even the Chera Kings hailed from this tribe is evident from the titles the Chera Kings used. i.e., *Vanavarempan Nedumcheralathan* etc. According to the *Silappathikaram* they claimed affinity with the Vanavar inhabiting the Himalayas and expressive of their origin they adopted the title of *Vanavarempan* or *Imayavarempan*. The stanzas in *Pattupattu* contain references to Nedumcheralathan alias *Imaya Varampan Kalankaikkani — Nar-mudicheral alias Vana-Varampan Chenkuttuvan, Imaya Varampan Nattu-Kodapattu Cheralathan*, alias *Vana Varampan* etc. The commentator *Nachchinikiniyar* misread the expression *Vanaviral-vel* as *Manaviral-vel*. The expression meant that these kings were the chiefs of the *Vanevas*. According to one interpretation this word means "Beloved of the Gods"

mountain in the extreme south'. (A History of South India 1958, p. 86). There is also a section of scholars who contend that the Kosar can be identified with *Vatukar* or the Northerners and they are described to have been sent by the Mauryas to attack Mokur (The Mauryan Problem in Sangam Works in Historical Perspective unpublished paper, quoted by Veluthatt Kesavan in Kerala Studies, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 12—13) They are said to have encroached the territory of Nannan where they adopted a policy of slaughter en masse.

Vanavar (God) + *Ampan (beloved)*. Yet another interpretation is that this word meant friend or protector[92] *(Ampan)* of the Cheras *(Vanavar)*. Mutinakarayar describes the empire of *(Utiyancheralathan* as extending from the Eastern to the Western sea and hence the above two interpretations. However these views can not be accepted in the light of recent research.

Identity of Nannan

Malaipadukadam by *Perunkausikanar* of Perunkunrur speaks of Nannan as the son of Nannan referred to by *Mangudi Marudanar*[93]. This occurs in *Pattupattu* or the Ten Idylls. Since *Pattupattu* clearly states Nannan as the son of another Nannan we cannot definitely aver whether Nannan I or Nannan II is the celebrated king who defeated the Cheras and other neighbouring chieftains alluded to in the *Akananuru*, *Nattinai* and other works. There seems to be some basis in the statement of K.V. Krishna Iyer, that at the beginning of the Christian era Kerala was the small state that it had been at the time of Megesthenes with no more than 60 elephants, comprising only Kudanad flanked in the South by Kuttanad and Venad controlled by the Pandyas and in the North by Puzhinad belonging to Nannan I of Tulunad[94]. According to him Utiyan gave his daughter in marriage to Nannan I of Tulunad partly to extend his influence northwards, partly to win him from his alliance with the pirates who preyed on the Roman ships coming to Muziris (Kodungalloor). As Nannan I continued to help the pirates the Chera Prince turned against him. The contention that the Kannada speaking area which the Tamils of the day referred to as Mozhipeyar—Desam i.e., the area where language

92. It is worthy of notice that the use of Achchan for Appan is given by the Tamil grammars as an illustration of the Tamil of the Kuda—nadu, the western country. Ariyan—kavu means Aryan's guard. Aryan or Arya that is Hari—hara-putra, the common equivalent of whose name is Aiyanar, is supposed to be the guardian of the boundaries. Kavu is the Malayalam equivalent of the Tamil *Kaval* (guard) (Bishop R. Caldwell. A History of Tinnevelly. New Delhi. 1982. p. 25 foot-note.)

93. The poem which is in 583 lines celebrates the achievements of the Chieftain Nannan, as well as his ancestors and his court. There is reference to the Siva shrine in the Naviram hill in the kingdom of Nannan and also to the agricultural products, mountains and gardens found therein.

94. A History of Kerala. 1965. Coimbatore. p. 43.

other than Tamil was spoken lay to the north of the Ezhimalai kingdom is untenable[95]. The Chera prince Imaya Varempan, (the hero of Pattu II (Idyll II) by Kannanar) drove him out of Puzhinad. It is stated in Pattupattu, Pattu III that on the death of Utiyan Palyanai—Sel Kelu kuttuvan, the hero of Pattu III became puzhiyarkon or King of Puzhinad. Further the crowning achievement of Palyanai was the conquest of Kongunad or

95. See A Survey of Kerala History — A Sreedhara Menon, p. 66 and Studies in Kerala History, Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, p. 41). The contention that Konkakaramis is to be differentiated from Konkani in Maharastra is untenable. Konkan as defined in the *Sahyadri Khanda* comprises of seven divisions including Kerala. *Konkanas* as a tribe are mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, *Harivamsa* and *Markandaya Purana* and their location points to what was called Konkan in historical times. It cannot be definitely stated whether the name Konkanas was responsible for the nomenclature of the territory. A tradition states that Konkan was named after Parasurama's mother *Renuka* or *Kamali* who is also said to have been known as *Kunkana*. The *Vasudevarodaya kavya* of Viswanatha specifically relates the creation and colonisation of Konkan and the various sacred sites there (M.S. No. 5213 in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, pp. 178—80). The account is as follows: "The land which was recovered by Parasurama from the Ocean known as Ramaksetra was 100 yojanas in length and 6 in breadth between the Sahya and the Ocean and the Vaitarani and Kerala. Being produced by the arrow, it was known as Isupata and also as Talakunkana as it was at the bottom Kunkana. Kunkana and its residents are said to be censurable while Ramaksetra is a holy place (A.D. Pusalker, *Parasurama* and *Konkan* (Kerala Studies, pp. 1—13). Another historical celebrity remarks: "In the *Vadesvarodaya Kavya* the northern boundary is said to be the river Vaitarani, and southern, Kerala. If Vaitarani is taken to be near Nasik, these limits would make the reclaimed land a hundred yojanas in length and three in breadth. Gokarna may be taken to be the southern limit of Konkan (Salatore, Ancient Karnataka, p. 25).

The state of things indicated by the Parasurama legend with regard to Kerala has been, according to geologists shown to have come into existence at least two thousand years before Christ. According to A.D. Pusalker the approximate period of the age of Parasurama is circa 2500 B.C. (History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. I) From a historical point of view, it may be plausible that one Parasurama was the leader of the Bhrgus who first began colonising Kerala As Parasurama is considered to be an immortal *(chirajivan*, long living, deathless) the work of the mythical hero Parasurama was continued by his decendants who were also known by the same name. See also Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai's Sahitya Gevashanamala (Malayalam). This evidently refers to the Aryanisation of the West Coast. The story in the *Sahyadri Khanda* referring to the conversion of 60 families of *Kaivartakas* (fishermen) into Brahmanas points to the fact that they were the primitive men of the country since pre-historic times. These Brahmanas came to be

Konkanam. According to the third Idyll, it is not even wrong to infer that the term Pandalayani (Pantar of Pattupattu) Puzhinad might have been named after Palyanai. On the abdication of Palyanai, his sister's son Nannan II made a bold bid to recover Puzhinad which had been wrested from his father by Imaya Varempan. It is certain that this Nannan II is the celebrated warrior King during whose reign Ezhimalai reached the zenith of its glory[96].

Extent of Nannan's territory

On an examination of all the views of historians and archaeologists, it is now accepted on all hands that the country between the Venkatam hills (Tirupathi hills, 80 miles north-west of Madras) and Cape Comorin bounded by the sea on the East and West was the *Tamilakam* of the early centuries of the Christian era and the entire area ruled by the three crowned kings (the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas) and chieftains. The geographical

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called *Chitapavanas* as their purification *(pavana)* took place on the cremation ground *(chita)*. There are certain other derivations of the word *chitapavana* as 'pure of heart', 'whose hearts are full', 'those purified by sacrifice', 'purified through sacrifice', 'those that purify' 'the refugees', 'those who purified the earth', etc. It is possible that the first Brahmins of Kerala were the aborigines converted to a new faith and conferred a higher social status even though subsequent immigration (referred in Vadesvarodaya kavya) took place in the wake of Aryanisation. The early Brahmins may be the *Namboothiries* as can be gathered from physical characteristics (stature, dolichocephalic and mesorrhine) common to Nambutiris, Nayars and other castes revealed in the biological surveys, conducted by anthropologists from time to time.

96. It is claimed by some historians that Nandana, second king in the legendary genelogy of the Muzhika kings as given by poet Atula in *Muzhakavamsa-kavva* is the Nannan that looms large in the Sangam literature. In that case it is assumed that Ramaghatamushika, the founder of Muzhikavamsa is only a legendary figure and the dynasty begins with Nannan (M. G. S. Narayanan. Re-interpretations in South Indian History, Trivandrum. 1977, pp. 58–65). According to the accounts of the Tamil poets Nannan was killed by a Chera King by the name of Narmudicheral in a battle fought at Vakaipperumturai. This was to avenge the death of his army chief Ay Eyinan at the hands of Nanna's Commander named Mili. There is another king by the name of Nannan Utiyan ruling the locality. Atan Elini, the ruler of Cellur also is mentioned by Tamil writers (Studies in Kerala History, Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, p. 47). This contention for the possible identification of the Muzhika king with the namesake mentioned in Sangam literature has been disputed by another scholar (N. V. Krishna Warrier, Vijnana Kairali, pp. 555–56). "Since the author of Mushikavamsa mentions the aachaya origin (stanza 4–27) of

stanzas of the Sangam works do not help us to give the boundaries and extent of the three kingdoms and the principalities of chieftains. Further the boundary lines between the three bellicose kingdoms had been continually shifting and we cannot rely on the glorifications of the panegyrics of poets. The reference in the classics mention the territories of the Chieftain Nannan as within the Chera limits beyond which an alien tongue prevailed and the Chieftain seems to be related to the Cheras[97]. The territories of the Chieftain Nannan is mentioned as one which experienced incessant rainfall and full of bamboo plants[98]. On the basis of the above details, it is possible to surmise that the land of Nannan might be somewhere in the Wynad forests contiguous to the modern Karnataka—Kerala border. This is reinforced by the proximity of the Kannada speaking Karnataka region to the Wynad forests. Another citation in the classics[99] lays down that "the Chera ruler Katumkoo Vaattyaatan *regained lost territory* from Nannan by defeating him in the battle of Perumturai". Therefore the two localities were adjacent areas at the northern limit of the Chera land. Even to-day the northern limit of the present Kerala is the southern extremity of Karnataka. In ancient times too, the position would have been more or less contiguous.

Nannan's date

It is asserted that Nannan who is mentioned in *Akam* (13) as having been invited by the Kosar[100] and as having lost his

kings and their marriage alliances with Cedi and Magadha royal houses during the early period, the possibility of the Musakas being indentical with the early rulers of Elimalai is almost ruled out". (N. P. Unni, A History of Mushikavamsa, pp. 95—96). K. Mahadeva Sastri doubts that Atula who might have heard many legendary accounts of the origin of his country was drawing on some such account to mould the early history of the Mushikas (Keralacharitam, 1939). The view that the Mushika kings were the descendants of the ancient family of Nannan or that Atula's Nandana was the famous Warrior king Nannan does not hold good in the above background of the reinterpretations.

97 Akam 258 Nannan is mentioned also as Nannan Utiyan in a few verses and the suffix Utiyam indicates that he is related to the Cheras.

98. Akam 345 . 7.

99. Akam 199 . 19—23 Silappadikaram, Uraiperikatturai—Para 2.

100. The Kosars occupy a considerable place in the literature of the Sangam period and they should find a place in the earliest enumeration of the political divisions of the Tamilakam next to the three main kingdom of the South.

state elephant, ruled over South Canara and North Canara[101]. These events are assigned to the second century A.D.[102]. The inference of the compiler of the Cannanore District Gazetteer whose remark was primarily based on Prof. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai's studies that Nannan came to prominence in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. as almost a settled question is apt to be misleading in the absence of any definite historic record[103]. The *Malaipadukadam* (Nannan is the hero of this poem) along with other Sangam works like *Nedunalvadi* and *Maduraikkanchi* and other works are assigned prior to 2nd or 3rd century A.D. as many northern Puranic legends as well as Sanskrit words and expressions do not find a place in these works. Nakkirar, the author of *Nedunalvadi* provides some astronomical clues regarding the probable date of his composition in lines 160 to 162 of the poem[104]. He refers to the *rasi* or zodiacal constellations by way of indicating the date. These astronomical details are not known to have been employed before 300 A.D. according to L.D. Swamikkannu Pillai, the well-known astronomer[105]. To quote him "the early Indian Literature (Sanskrit or Dravidian) before 300 A.D. does not refer to the signs of the Zodiac, to the movements of the planet or to the planetary horoscopes, which are, as it were, 'the tripod of Astrology'. Therefore the *Nedunalvadi*, as well as 229 of the *Purananuru* which also speaks of *rasi*, cannot be dated earlier than this period". S. Vaiyapuri Pillai suggests 250 A.D. as the approximate date of the *Nedunalvadi* and the poems contemporaneous with it.

Nannan's campaigns

Nannan was a warrior Chieftain of insatiable ambition. His attempts to expand his kingdom brought him into encounters with the Chola commander *Pazhaiyan* who died in action. *Akam* 44 lays down that his accomplices were *Ettai, Atti, Gangan, Katti*[106] and Puntural. Nannan extended his sway over the

101. Indian Antiquary LIV, pp. 37–38. Some contributions of South India to Indian Culture, S. K. Aiyangar.

102. Ancient Karnataka, B. A. Saletore, p. 49.

103. P. 64, Trivandrum 1972. See also pp. 41–42 Studies in Kerala History by Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, Kottayam, 1970.

104. A Social History of the Tamils. Vol. I, pp. 110–11 K. K. Pillai, Madras 1975.

105. Ibid. p. 111.

106. In Silappatikaram also Kattiyar is mentioned along with Gangar. Gangar Naivel Kattiyar.

northern parts of Coimbatore in addition to Wynad and Gudalur. In Akam 152 Paranar speaks of Nannan's victory in a campaign against a king called Pindal. There is reference to this battle in Nattinai (270) also. But the most outstanding campaign of Nannan was the battle of Pazhi. In this battle Nannan's commander Minili vanquished and killed the Chera Commander Ay Eyinan. In a *Maruthum* piece (poem on the love after marriage and separation—*Karpu)* sung by Paranar, the court poet at Ezhimalai the cause of the battle is thus stated "when Nannan of the bannered chariot and golden ornaments came up against Punnad[107], Ay Eyinan who promised succour in Pazhi where harps sound in the streets, fought with the determined enemy Minili and gave up his life—(Akam 396). Punnad is east of Wyanad. "Punnad Thousand" is mentioned in the Mercara copper plates. The kingdom of Punnad at its glory comprised the whole of Coorg with a portion of Karnataka and Wyanad. After the battle of Vakkai Perunthurai the Ezhimala Kingdom became a part of the Chera kingdom and the chieftain of Punnad accepted the paramountcy of the Cheras[108]. *Narmudi* Cheral, the successor of Palayani Chel Kel Kuttuvan defeated Nannan in a series of battles and Nannan was forced to retreat from his capital at Pazhi and take the refuge in the Wayanad hills. Nannan's fleeing from the capital is graphically described by Mosikiranar in (*Akam 392)*.The climax of Nannan's encounters with Narmudi Cheral ended with defeat of Nannan in the great battle of Vakai Perunturai. The heroic resistance of Nannan is described in a colourful way in *Akam*. Kalladanar in *Akam* 199

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107. Dr. Gundert Nighandu, Kottayam 1962, p. 628—Punal-nadu. This was one of the 13 Nadus into which old Tamizhagom was divided (Tolkappiyanar). (The Tamils 1800 years ago—V. Kanakasabhai 1966—Madras, p. 12). Nachchinarkiniyar gives a slightly different list of the Nadus. Ganasagara gives the name as Punal—nadu. According to Sankaranamachchivayar, the Chen—Tamil-nad excluded the Chola country or punal-nadu. According to Kanakasabhai—punal—nadu signifies the land of floods around the mouth of the river Kaveri. Ibid. p.24. There was here a Buddhist Chaitya which Hiuen Tsiang visited. Ammuvanar (Akam 35) record that north-west of Punal-nadu and west of Aruvanadu was Maladu or Malayaman Nadu. Karikala Chola is said to have formulated a grand plan of controlling the frequent floods which wrought much havoc in Punal-nadu.

108. Studies in Kerala History 43, Kottayam 1970.

speaks of "Narmudicheral who in the battle of Vakai harbour[109] in Kudanad made a mark by destroying Nannan". The court poet of Narmudi Cheral in *Pattuppattu* praises the astounding victory of his master thus: "Narmudiccheral, who cut the Vakai, the guardian tree of Nannan, of the beautiful chariots". With the fall of the great hero and gallant warrior Nannan the fame of the Kingdom of Ezhimalai sank into oblivion and Poozhinad became a part of the Chera empire.

V THE AY KINGDOM

The Ays were the most well known contemporaries of the early and later Cheras about whom references occur in several poems of the Sangam age[110]. The kingdom was within the Chera country and it was one of the divisions of the Chera kingdom. In the Sangam era the Ay kings, later independent, seem to have been a tributary of the Cheras. The Ay king Andiran is mentioned in the classics "as the lover of Tamil and men of letters of whom he bestowed gifts abundantly[111]. In *Purananuru* there is a reference which reads: "If the Himalayas is situated in the north and *Ayakudi*[112] in the south, how can the world (i.e. the land in between them) lose its balance". This eulogistic verse places Ayakudi as the Southern boundary of the Chera country. Ptolemy calls the region from Baris[113] or Bakarei

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109. The present Vakayar where the Bharathapuzha joins the sea.

110. Tamizhakom of old was triangular in shape with its apex towards the south. The two ranges of the Ghats provided a sort of basic unity to the plains of Tamizhakam due to Nilgiris and thereafter the spurts and hillocks jutting into the interior divided the country into several smaller units of territory. There was therefore no political unity. This accounts for the rise of the chieftains. There were 18 semi-independent such chieftains and the Ays were one among them. (p. 21, A Social History of Tamils, K. K. Pillai, 1975).

111. Akananuru, 127 : 17—18.

112. There is a place called Aykudi near Shenkotta and some scholars identify this place with the Ay capital. See Suchindram Temple, Dr. K. K. Pillai, p. 15 and Chila Kerala Charithra Prasnangal, Part I, Ernakulam, p. 102.

113. Pampa—Some say that the region between Nelcynda (Niranam) and Comorin as in the country of Aoi (Kerala Society Papers 1928—32, Trivandrum, p. 27) Nelcynda is in the vicinity of modern Cochin harbour and Cranganore according to most historians.

to Cape Comorin. Aioi (Ay) where the chieftains of the Ay clan ruled. *Purananuru* refers to the Ay kings who ruled the Podiyil kingdom. They had their capital at Ay Kudi in the Podiyil Mountain.[114] Early Tamil literature preserves a few accounts of the visits of persons from Chola—Pandyan kingdoms to the Chera country. The Aramboly Pass formed the easiest route for persons proceeding from the Podiyil hill to Cape Comorin. The pilgrims usually made a *Pradakshina* movement to the right of the *Podiyil* hill and then entered through the Aramboly Pass. Pilgrims from Tinnevelly as a rule preferred the route via. the Podiyil to worship in the sacred hill of the Father of Tamil and bathing in the falls there. In the *Silapathikaram* Madalan, the Brahmin friend of Kovalan is described as proceeding to the Cape after leaving the hill of the sacred Sage to his right. The same poem tells us that Parasara, the great master of debate desirous of having an audience of the Chera king journeyed to Kerala along the *Podiyil* hill. Besides *Silapathikaram* the *Kamba Ramayanam*. the great Tamil epic of the 12th century A.D. refers to this general route along the Podiyil hill. *Sugreeva* the monkey king of *Kishkinda* tells *Hanuman* the way to *Lanka* thus—"If you reach the Tamil Sangam of the sacred sage on the wide Podiyil hill you will make the place for ever your home. Therefore go ahead leaving the mountain to the left and the river by name Porunai (Tamraparni) with its golden waters far behind you and then you will see the slope of the long range of the Mahendra mountain with little elephants playing about and the southern sea". The above description fits in with the facts of geography. The *Podivil*

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114. The whole of the Western Ghats South of Kampam Churam is called Podiyil or Pidiyam. It is also known Tenmalai or Malayam. According to Caldwell the true Tamil name of the mountain is *Podigei* pronounced *Pothigei* (the *Podivam* of the poets) or *Peria* (the greater) *Podigei* in contradistinction to a smaller mountain in the same neighbourhood. The root meaning of *Podi* being 'to cover', 'to conceal' *Podigei* may have meant 'a place of concealment'. This mountain is commonly called by the English Agastier—that is, the *rishi* Agastya's hill—Agastya being supposed to have finally retired thither from the world after civilising the Dravidians—A comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages, p. 101—The mountain range meant is evidently that of the Southern ghats. i. e., *the* range of mountains stretching from the Coimbatore gap to Cape Comorin.

hill is correctly placed to the left of the travellers who proceeded from the north of Kerala along the mountain range of the western Ghats towards Tamilnadu. *Podiyil* refers to *Agastyakudam* range from which the river *Tamraparni* takes its origin. The meaning of the title *Ehumudimarpen* of the Chera king evidently refers that he was overlord of the seven lesser chieftains among whom the Ay tribal chieftain also finds a place. This leads us to the conclusion that the Ay tribal chieftain was a feudatory of the Cheras.

The Ays were the earliest ruling tribes in South Kerala before the rise of Venad as a political power. They exercised considerable political authority till the beginning of the 9th century A.D[115]. They were semi-independent sometimes under the Cheras and sometimes under the Pandyas and sometimes asserted their independence. All evidence point to the fact that the areas lying south of Tiruvella were under the suzerainty of the Ays in the Sangam Age. Aykudi, Perayakudi, Edaikkode, Ayiraveli, Ayiroor, Edarayakkudi, Anthayakkudi are some of the place names connected with the Ay epoch in the ancient history of Tamizhakom. The Ays are variously referred in the Sangam literature as *Vallavas*, *Ballavas* or *Yadavas* of Shrikrishna's illustrious race. Nacchinarkiniyar, the 14th century commentator of *Tolkappiyam* has stated that the Ays came to Tamizhakom from Dwaraka along with the Sage Agastya. In some inscriptions of a later period the Ays are pictured as Yadavas or *Vrishnis*. Some scholars however question this attempt to identify the Ays with the descendants of Krishna as a deliberate one to establish the growth of Brahmanical Hinduism in the south as having originated in the north. But all authorities on Sangam

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115. In his introduction to *Lilathilakam*, Attur Krishna Pisharodi in giving an account of *Chiravayi* says that the Ayar family who were ruling the regions near Ayakkudi (in Shencotta) and other places, were defeated by the Pandyas in the 8th century A.D. and they migrated to Vizhinjam, a sea port eight miles south-east of Trivandrum. Once of the kings built the Parthivapuram temple in the Vilavancode Taluk. In the 10th century A.D. they were driven away by the Pandyan king and the family migrated to a region between Kayamkulam and Tiruvella and established a principality and assumed the title of Chiravayi Swarupam. The Travancore sovereigns trace their origin from the Chiravayi Swarupam.

literature assert that the Ays like the Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas were Dravidians[116]. There has been an attempt in the past to establish some sort of consanguinity between the ancient rulers of the south with one or other of the 18 Yadava clans who are believed to have migrated from the north in the Puranic age under the leadership of the pioneer coloniser, sage Agastya. The connection of the Ay chiefs claiming to belong to the *Vrishnikula* forms part of that attempt[117]. An attempt has also been made by historians of the past to draw the inference that the Pandyas and the Ay chiefs were of one stock because the Karnataka rulers had intimate dealings with the Pallavas[118]. Later research has however shown that this inference is confusing fact for fiction and to postulate basically unhistoric conclusions. As regards the alleged Yadava descent common to the Ucchangi Pandyas and the Ay chiefs it may be noted that no tangible conclusion can be drawn from it. Salatore observes; "diverse feudatory families with nothing common between them styled themselves as having belonged to the Lunar race. Thus, for instance, both the Ucchangi Pandyas and Hoysalas claimed to be of the Yadava *vamsa*. But it is wrong to infer that they had a common origin. The Yadava claims of all or most of the ruling families of southern and western India, especially of the medieval times, are wholly inadmissible". The statement in the Paliyam Copper Plates of the Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna (885— 926 A.D.) that the Ays were descended from the family of the Yadavas or the Vrishnikulas "which originated from the

116. Studies in Kerala History, op.cit.p. 165

117. Travancore Archaeological Series I, p. 191

118. Ancient Karnataka B.A. Salatore, Vol. I, pp.243-45, *Samgramadhira* alias Rama Varma, one of the acknowledged ancestors of the royal line of Travancore is said to have belonged to the *Yadukula* sprung from the Chandravamsa (line of the Moon God).

It is worthy of note here that the Ay chieftains belonged to the Yadukula vrishni line which was a part of *Chandrakula*. The probability is that these Ay kings merged later with the Venad kings enlarging the *Chandravamsa*. It is argued that the paternal system of inheritance from father to son of the Cheras obtained from the Ay kings whose line at a later period in history merged with the Chera king as judged from inscriptions (T.A.S. Vol. I.p.4).

moon who became free from his dark spot by giving birth to this illustrious family" may be viewed against the above background. It was the ingenuity of the later priestly Brahmin writers mainly instrumental for the fictitious ancestry of linking the Ays with the Yadavas as was done by them in the case of the Pandyas and Pallavas and other ruling tribes. Clarence Maloney in his "Archaeology in South India: Accomplishments & Prospects" pertinently points out: "the prevalence of diverse occupations, being patronized by an elite element leading an essentially urban way of life, though not rigidly hierarchical as in later medieval centuries. Named people may be considered as tribes, geographical or occupational castes or ruling lineages e.g. Kadambar, Velir, Oliyar, Aruvalar, Maravar, Ayar, Kocar, Oviyar, Paratavar, Palaiyar, Vellalar, Nager and others". The fusion of tribes into incipient status was going on before and during the Sangam period, much as it had in the plains of the North, half a millenium later. Chera kings fought numerous battles on the sea, and incorporated all the territory from northern Sri Lanka upto Tuluva, amply described in Pattupattu. Pandyas annexed the Coimbatore region from the Palaiyar and the Cape region from the Ays.

Before proceeding to assess the achievement of the prominent Ay kings of the Sangam Age, it is pertinent to note that the cowherd class formed an important element in the rural economy of the Tamil country. *Mullai*, the pastoral region formed the traditional habitat of the cowherds[119] and sheperds. It is important to note that the fertile region in the South known as Nanchinad famous for its salt — pans and paddy fields in early times formed the seat of the early Ay kingdom. Nanjinad literally meaning the "land of the plough" and its fertility might have led to the incessant Pandyan and Cholan incursions. It was rightly called "the cock—pit of the South". Indeed these cowherd chieftains occupied a high social position

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119. The ancient word 'Aa' used by the poets of the early Sangam age meant cow. 'Aayan' meant cowherd. It is pertinent here to note that bull-fighting was common among the Ays. A powerful bull would be turned loose and he who could control it would be given a maiden's hand in marriage.

in ancient Tamizhakom[120]. The significance of the study of the dynastic history of the Ays lies in the fact that they provide clues concerning the agrarian order of the Tamizhakom of the hoary days which preceded the Pallava—Cholan period. The Ays held a nuclear area of Tamizhakom and the three rulers, the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya mainly relied on them to increase their wealth and glory.Another important historical fact is that the system of collective Brahmin landlord hegemony of nuclear areas had not yet begun in the period of Tamil anthologies.

VI THE EARLY AY RULERS

1. Ay Andiran

Andiran bearer of the tribal title of Ay was perhaps the most outstanding among the Ay chieftains of the Sangam period. He figures prominently in *Purananuru*. He is praised by the Sangam poets Muda Mosiyar, Odaikkizhar and Kiranar. He established a powerful rule in the region extending from the Palghat Gap to Cape Comorin in the south[121]. His kingdom extended from the Pampa in the North—west to the Tamraparni in the Soutn—East. Certain parts of Tinnevelly and the Western Ghats were within his principality. All the territories South of Kuttanad were also included in Andiran's principality[122]. His country is described as fertile and as the frame of the elephants. His favoured gifts to the poets and scholars were elephants. It is claimed that the elephant was the tribal symbol and the Pandyas adopted the emblem after their subjugation of the Ay kingdom. Andiran was also a great warrior. Munda Mosiyar records a great victory of Andiran in Kargunad (Kongunad) by which the first Chera attempt to extend their supremacy over Coimbatore and Salem was thwarted. Some historians are of the view that Andiran defeated the Kongus only as a feudatory

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120. There is a section of scholars who believe that the Hidaraja mentioned in the Rock Edict xiii of Asoka is supposed to be a variant of *Idayaraja* meaning chief of the cowherds. As the Ays were cowherds Asoka's Hidaraja might have been the Ay chief.

121 Sivaraja Pillai, Chronology, 79, 163.

122. Studies in Kerala History, Elamkulam, p.166.

of the Cheras. Ay Andiran fought under Palyani's banner in Kongunad. Palyani of the Chera dynasty entered Kongunad by way of north while Andiran advanced from the south and caught between the two forces, the Kongus gave up all resistance and surrendered. His capital Aykudi is portrayed as inaccessible to enemies and as the balancing mountain in the south to the Himalayas in the North. The poet Mudamudiar in *Puram* 32 praises Aykudy saying that but for Aykudy in the South, the flat earth would lose its equilibrium due to the weight of the Himalayas in the North[123]. A devout worshipper of the God Siva, he propitiated him with a cloth of very fine texture given to him by a *naga chieftain, Nila. On his death Andiran was welcomed in the abode of the gods and the drum in Indra's palace reverberated at his arrival*[124]. The many wives he had committed sati on his death. But it is doubtful to presume that the self-immolation on the husband's funeral pyre was common during the early Sangam age even though *Tolkappium* speaks of *Sati* as committed only by the supremely noble women.

Tithiyan

Tithiyan is considered as the sucessor of Andiran. Paranar in *Akananuru* describes the *Podiyil* hills of Tithiyan, and the *Kaviram* hills of the Ay chieftains. Kapilar also was a contemporary of Tithiyan. The Pandyan king Poothapandian praises the Ay king Tithiyan as *Podiyil Colvan* and his military accomplishments. We are therefore led to presume that Tithiyan was

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123. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. op.cit.p.116.

124. There are two villages known by the name. One is in Shencottah on the eastern border of Kerala. The other is near Kottar in Kanyakumari District of Tamilnad. Ptolemy says that Kottiara, the present Kottar was the metropolis of the Ay country. Pliny calls the town Kottara (T.A.S. Vol. VI, Part I, p.i). S. Sanku Iyer has established from inscriptional and literary evidence that Aykudi near Kottar was the capital of the Ay country. *Akananuru* 198 speaks of a mountain called *Kaviram* in the Ay country. M. Raghava Aiyangar identifies *Kaviram* as a hill near Kumaracoil which is even today known by the name of *Kavaram*. This will serve as an additional support in favour of the above identification (some Aspects of Kerala and Tamil Literature, Part II, p.48, Trivandrum, 1950).

an independent chieftain[125]. From *Akananuru*, we learn that Tithiyan was one among the five chiefs who helped the confederacy formed by the Cholas and Cheras against the Pandyan chief Nedumchezhian and was defeated by him[126] in the battle of Thalaialanganam. Paranar praises the valour and generosity of Tithiyan.

Athiyan

Athiyan is the next important Ay chieftain who figures prominently in the Sangam literature. Paranar in describing the victorious flag of the Pandyan warrior chieftain Azhakiya-pandian also known as Pasumpoonpandia states that it flew on the top of the hills of Athiyan, the magnanimous and brave chieftain. Mathuraikkanakkayanar also refers to *Podiyal* hills as belonging to Azhakiyapandia. This is reminiscent of the annexation of the eastern and western portion of the *Podiyil* kingdom. We are led to presume that the disintegration of the Ay Chieftaincy set in during Athiyan's rule.

The conquest of the *Podiyil* kingdom enabled the Pandyas to widen the limits of their principality to the Arabian Sea. There is a view that Azhakiapandiapuram named after Azhakiyapandia was the town of Athiyannur, originally founded by Athiyan[127].

After the time of Athiyan, the Ays made attempts to regain their lost ascendancy after the crushing defeat at Talaialanganam. It could be noted that the Ays at a later period succeeded in becoming supreme in Central and South Travancore which were originally parts of the Podiyil Kingdom. However they

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125. K.K. Pillai (Suchindram Temple, p. 16) is of the view that an understanding was arrived at between the two chieftains fixing Poothapandy as the western limit of the Pandyan Kingdom.

126. Here is a graphic description of the victory of Nedumchezhia
Thou didst fly like the wind,
spread fire around
Destroy the country of thy foes, encamp
At Alanganam scaring them, cut down
The chiefs and seize their drums.

127. T.A.S. III, p. 17—However there is another Athiyannoor near Vizhinjam.

were never able to regain their former absolute position and prestige. These events might have occurred at the close of the 3rd century A.D. The Pandyan King Nedumchezhiyan commemorated by the title "he who won the battle at Talaia-langanam" may be taken to have ruled about 210 A.D.[128]. However the growth of the Pandyan power in Madurai endangered their independence from very early times. The early history of the Ays shows that the struggle between them and the Pandyas in which the latter had always the advantage, began even during the Sangam age.

From the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. until the early 7th century a dark age (without internal supporting evidence records of any kind) engulfed over Kerala like the rest of South India. However we understand from the Sangam works that various families of Ay group ruled in different parts of South India. Some historians aver that the Athiyaman family which ruled with Takadur (Dharmapuri) as capital belong to the Ay group. From many verses in Purananuru and elsewhere we learn that Nedumananchi and his son Ezhini were famous among the Takadur Chieftains. Nedumananchi was the patron of great poetess Avvaiyar. Ezhini is described as having fought against Perumcheral and died at Takadur. This chieftain is referred to as *Vanchiyar Kulapathi*. Mangudi Kizhar of the 6th century A.D. praises Ezhini Athan who ruled with Vattaru[129] as capital. Aiyur Mudavanar praises another Athan Ezhini who was the ruler of Chellur. It is not certain whether this Ezhini is the same chieftain who ruled with the capital at Vattaru. K.N. Sivaraja Pillai is of the view that Athan Ezhini was the son of Ezhini Athan. However this identification is not supported by any convincing historical evidence. According to Elamkulam Ay Eyinan referred by Paranar was the son of Veliyan, ruler of Veliyam in Kottarakkara Taluk who belonged to a branch of the Ay dynasty.

The history of the Ay Kings would be incomplete without a reference to the famous Nanchil Valluvan on whom praises are showered by outstanding poets like Avvaiyar. It is said that

128. A History of South India, Opp.cit.p.121.

129. Vattaru is Thiruvattar in Old South Travancore according to Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai—Studies in Kerala History, p.169.

Nanchil Valluvan belonged to the Paraya tribe and ruled the fertile Nanchinad of old South Travancore. The Parthivapuram Copper Plates of Karunantadakkan and the Tirunanthikkara inscriptions of Rajah Rajah, the Great and the Kailasanatha temple inscription at Karippukottai,[21] delineate that the northern part of Nanchinad was called Valluvanad. The place perhaps got its name because of the association with rule of the Valluva chieftains.

However we have no adequate records to throw light on the reign of this royal family. The Valluvanad celebrated in Bhriga Sandesa and the Tiruvottiyur Sanskrit inscription of 960 A.D. and in the Jewish Copper Plate of Bhaskara Ravi Varman I dated 1000 A.D. comprised the present Perunthalmanna and Ottappalam taluks and parts of Ponnani, Tirur and Eranad taluks.

VI THE EARLY CHERAS

The ancient history of Kerala is universally identified as the history of the Cheras. No definite date as to when the Chera rule began can be laid down. According to a traditional account mentioned by W. Francis [130] the three great kingdoms of the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas in the dim mists of antiquity were founded by three brothers who originally resided at Korkai, near the mouth of Tamraparni river in the Tirunelveli country; eventually the brothers separated, the Pandyan remaining at home while the Chola and the Chera went forth to seek their fortunes and that soon afterwards the Pandya founded a kingdom comprising of Madurai and Tirunelveli districts while the Chera and the Chola founded the kingdoms comprising of the Travancore country and the districts of Malabar and Coimbatore on the one side and the districts of Tanjore and Tiruchirappalli on the other. In the absence of anything to corroborate, the veracity of this assertion cannot be vouchsafed for. But there is abundant evidence to show that at the beginning of the Christian era, the Chera Kingdom was a settled fact co-existing with those of the Pandyas and the Cholas as testified from the classical writers of Greece and Rome like Strabo, Periplus, Pliny, Ptolemy, Ceylonese

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130. Gazetteer of Madurai District, Vol.I, 1906, p.25

classical sources.[131] and the edicts of Asoka. However none of these sources make clear the chronology of the kings or the dates of the events. Even with the aid of epigraphy whose void is pronounced the history of Cheras is not congenial to fix the chronology.

The Chera monarchy is first mentioned not in historical chronicle but in the early poems of the Sangam epoch. In the Sangam period, the Chera kingdom comprised of the present day, Central Kerala and also Kongunadu which now corresponds to the Coimbatore and Salem districts of Tamilnadu. The genesis of the Chera Kingdom may be traced to Kuttanadu on the West—Coast. Gradually with the passage of time it extended across the Palghat gap into Kongunadu and its capital was in Karur—Vanci. Its institutions, language and culture were contemporaneous with the rest of Tamilakam during the Sangam Age. The earliest stratum of Tamil poems known as Sangam literature which may be dated to the first three or four centuries A.D. enumerate more than 25 Chera Kings. The *Pattuppattu* or Ten Idylls help us to construct a continuous lineage geneology of twenty five Chera Rulers. Of the ten idylls, the first and the tenth have not come to light. M. Raghava Iyengar identified the verses which could be assigned to the Cheras as follows: "Verses sung on Chera monarchs, verses sung on places and incidents of the Chera country and verses sung on those who ruled parts of the Chera country or those who were related to Cheras". At the conclusion of each verse there is a colophon which is a guiding factor to classify the verses. Raghava Iyengar assigned 314 verses from the anthologies and a few lines from the Idylls to the Cheras. Thus the land of the Cheras formed an integral part of Tamilakam during the Sangam period when the entire area was ruled by the crowned kings and other chieftains. The entire area was mentioned "as the land where the Tamil language is spoken[132].

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131. In the arabicised Tamil works, Arid and Farit stand for the Chera, Saylaman and Suliyan for the Chola and Abdi, Aba, Chaba and Qaydi for the Pandyas (See Chapter III of Madras University Islamic Series No. 6).

132. Purananuru, 168; 18.

Apart from the verses of Pattuppattu a few verses from Purananuru, Akananuru, Kurumthokai and Nattinai also refer to the Chera rulers. The verses sung on the tracts—*Marutham, Neytal, Paalai* and *Mullai*—pertain to the West Coast. The flora and fauna described in the verses are akin to the West Coast than to any other tract in ancient Tamilakam. The ten verses—*Tonitippattu*— vividly portray the glory of the Chera Capital, *Tonti*. The thirty—five verses on the arid and barren tract in *Kalithokai* evidently refer to the Chera country. Besides a good number of references in the classics, pertain to the chieftains Nannan, Utiyan etc.

The descriptions of the West Coast in the writings of foreigners like Pliny, Ptolemy and the author of Periplus of the Erythrean sea who visited South India in the early years of the Christian Era coincide with the accounts depicted in the Classics.

In his preamble to *Tolkappium* Paranar placed[133] the boundary of Tamilakam—"the land in which the Tamil language was spoken"—between the Southern Komari and Northern Venkatam. Venkatam is the modern Tirupathi, eighty miles north west of Madras[134]. The *Akananuru* states that different dialects were spoken in the territories beyond the lands of the Chieftains *Pulli, Katti* and Nannan of Ezhimalai[135]. The Sangam classics,

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133. The Tolkappium, a *prescriptive grammar and system of poetics* is considered by most historians as older than the earliest Tamil anthologies. But this contention has been questioned by Iravatham Mahadevan in his "Tamil—Brahmi Inscriptions of the Sangam age." According to him palaeographic features in the work show that it was written in or after fifth century A.D. (Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Tamil Studies, Vol. I—Madras, 1971).

134. In *Akananuru* it is stated by poet *Kalladanar* that the territory was ruled at the beginning of the sixth century by a Chieftain named Pulli. It is also learnt from Akananuru (213) that Venkatam belonged to the Pallavas. The area might have come under the rule of the Pallavas at a later date after *Kalladanar*.

135. See for details Culture of the Ancient Cheras M.E. Manickavasagom Pillai, Kovilpatti, 1970, pp.15-18.

averred that Kumari[136] was a perpetual bone of contention among the three crowned kings of old Tamizhakam—the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas.

The extent of Tamizhakom varied from age to age. In a legendary account Tamizhakom in primordial times extended farther into the South and to the East. It included 49 major divisions. This tradition incorporated in the *Iraiyanar Akapporul* is historically untenable. That Tamizhakom of historical times extended southwards from Tirupathi hill down to Kanyakumari surrounded by sea on the three sides has been widely accepted. This location was midway on the maritime routes between China and Mediterranean sea. There was active sea—borne trade with lands on the West and the East. The ports on the West Coast became a bee—hive of trading activity with Persia, Asia Minor, Babylon, Greece and Rome. The topographical features of Tamizhakom were the two ranges of mountains, the Western and Eastern Ghats, running for the major part almost parallel to the West and East Coast of the South Indian Peninsula. This peculiar geographical situation is attributed by certain historians to the absence of political unity in the past. The two ranges of the Ghats provided a basic unity to the plains of Tamizhakom down to the Nilgris and thereafter the spurts and hillocks jetting into the interior had been instrumental for the fragmentation break of the country into many small units. Each plain isolated by a hill range from the rest formed the basis of an independent chieftainship. Thus emerged the three well—known kingdoms of the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas besides a host of semi independent feudatories like the Ays of

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136. Cape Comorin or Kanniya Kumari is mentioned as early as Eratosthenes and was one of the points in the South known earliest to North India, while Greeks used it a fixed point for navigation. Ptolemy lists it among the ports, though one fails to see to-day where a port could have been located. Exacavations at the Cape would almost certainly be rewarding-Archaeology in South India Accomplishments and Prospects-Clarence Maloney. Essays on South India Edited by Burton Stein, p.33, 1977. The medieval commentators of *Tolkappium* and *Silappatikaram* say that *kumari* refers to Kamani river and not Kumari *munai* (point). According to them Kumari river and adjoining lands disappered in a deluge. They are the literary stalwarts who bring the story of Three Sangams. But it does not suggest to reason how a river came to flow between the sea and the shore.

Ayakudi, Adigamans of Tagadur, Thondaiman of Kanchi, Ori of Kollimalai etc. Seldom was political unification of Tamizhakom effected save on occasions when some outstanding monarch of the three kingdoms like Karikala Chola or Raja Raja I or Nedumchezhian Pandya vanquished the rulers of the neighbouring regions and exercised their dominance over them. These natural barriers were again responsible for a sizeable measure of social isolation which ultimately led the people of each region to evolve their own customs and manners.

The geographical features of the old Chera country may be reckoned against this background. Kerala's peculiar and distinct characteristics evolved under the influence of this natural environment.

The traditional boundaries of the Chera country in the 1st to the 3rd centuries A.D. as recorded by Logan who primarily based his conclusions from the account given by the author of the Periplus Maris Erythroei is as follows:

North — as far at least as Honore or Honavar (the Naoura of the Periplus.

South — As far as the Quilon (Southern Kollam) river.

East — As far as Karur, or perhaps the Kaveri river at that point.

West — The sea

In the Mackenzie Mss. the traditional boundaries of the Cheras was recorded as follows:

Stanza — (I)

"1. To the North, the place (or fane) Palanna (The modern Pulney) — hail !

To the East, Chengodu (probably Shencotta, near Tenkasi in Tirunelveli.)

"2. To the West point *Koli-kudu* (Apparently intended for Calicut) will be. The seashore of.

"3. The margin, that will be the South: an 80 *Katams (leagues)*

"4. The *Cheranad* boundary; speaking, say thou".

Stanza — (II)

"1. To the North, the place Palani (Pulney) hail! To the East, the South *Kasi* (Tenkasi)

"2. The West point *Koli-kudu* (Calicut) will become. The Seashore of.

"3. The margin that will make the South. An 80 *Katams* (leagues)

"4. The Cheranad boundary; speaking, say *thou*."

"4. The *Cheranad* boundary; speaking, say thou."

Another version

"On the North Palai (Pulney) to the East the great town (Perur) on the South the sea, on the West the great mountain, from East to West 40 *katams* (Leagues), from South to North 40 *katams* (leagues), making together 80 *katams*" According to Dr. K.K. Pillai the first *Nads* were Kudanad and Kuttanaad and later Chera monarchy was extended to the North, East and South by the conquest of Udiyan Cheral. This Kingdom extended from Thulunad in the north to Aykudi in the South.

The Sangam Works do not precisely demarcate the exact boundaries of the Chera Kingdom. The division of the Kingdom was not certainly based on any political consideration. During the early Chera epoch in Kerala History we find some degree of integration but it is not clear that "even if the regional political

system was integrated it fell apart easily because there was little pressing need and few facilities to hold it together.[137] The Sangam Classics give an insight into the political organisation of the times. The country was divided between small kings called Kurunilamannar. The authority of these chieftains — even the three chief kings, the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya — extended only within a small area constituting the capital and the land surrounding it. The state of political organisation to a very great extent represented the traditions of personal loyalty found in European feudalism.

The land lying north of Kanyakumari was known as Nanchinad.to its north was the Ay Kingdom, the region lying to its north was known as Kuttanad or "the land of lakes". Kudanad comprised regions to the north of Kuttanad. The northern-most division was known as Puzhinad. The mountainous region lying to the east of Puzhinad was called Karkanad. In short Kerala during this formative epoch was ruled by three powers i.e., the Ays in the South, the rulers of Ezhimalai in the north and the Cheras in the region lying between.

Population

The population of the ancient Chera country during the Sangam Age had been estimated on a rough and ready basis from the known to the unknown i.e., from the known population figures of the census of 1911 and backwards.[138]. The population of the ancient Chera country at the beginning and close of the Sangam period ranged between a million at the beginning and a million and a quarter at the close of the epoch.[139] This calculation can at best be considered a guess estimate.

The Age of the Early Cheras

The Age of the early Cheras can be determined only with

137. Essays on South India, Anthropological and Sociological Research in Kerala-Past, Present and Future directions by Joan P.Mencher and K. Raman Unni, p. 122-Delhi-1976.

138. See pages 23 to 28-Culture of the Ancient Cheras op.cit.

139. Ibid., p.27

reference to the Tamil literary works, generally known as Sangam.[140] Thanks to the labours of Scholars it is now accepted almost as a historical fact that the Sangam Age denotes the epoch of the third Tamil Sangam. The accounts in the Classics are based on traditions, myths and legends. Lack of epigraphical or other historical evidence is a complicating factor in determining the three Sangams.[141] The references in the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharatha* and *Arthasastra* refer only to the third Sangam at Madurai. There are also some passing references in the *Kalithokai* and *Silappadhikaram* relating to the submergence of the Pandyan territory. The citation of *Then Madurai* as *Dakshina Madurai* in the *Sri Lanka Mahavamsa* is not a reference to the modern Madurai according to historians. The mention in the Velvikudi grant of Parantaka Nedunchadayan to an academy of poets might have been with regard to third Sangam.

I. Mahadevan in deciphering two inscriptions[142] from Pugalur in the Tiruchirappalli District in Tamilnadu excavated by the Epigraphical Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India has dated these inscriptions to the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. These inscriptions record the names of the Chera Kings of three generations i.e., (1) Ko Atan Ceral Irumporai, (2) Perumkadungo and (3) Ilankadungo. He further proposed to identify the

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140. Sangam is the Tamil form of Sanskrit word and it is now held that the Sanskritised nme appeared only later after the influence of Sanskrit had penetrated into Tamilakam. Before that time, it was known by the names *Kudal*, *Arai* or *Manram*. The Scholars on Tamil literature consider that Sangam was first used by Jains and Buddhists whose religious organisations were called Sangha.

141. It is from the commentary to *Iraiyanar Akaporul* that we first get the accounts of the three Sangams or literary academies. The first Sangam had its seat at South Madurai, the original capital of the Pandyas, the place located far south of Kanyakumari. With the washing away of Then (South) Madurai by sea, the seat of the Sangam was shifted to Kadapuram. This Sangam is known as *Idaichchangam* or Middle Sangam. Kadapuram also disappeared into the sea. The seat of the Sangam was again shifted to Madurai, *(Uttara* or *Vada* Madurai, identical with the modern city of Madurai.

142. Studies in South Indian History and Epigraphy, K.G. Krishnan, Madras 1981, p. 24.

three kings with (1) Anduvan Ceral-Irumporai. (2) Celvak-Kadungovaliyatan and (3) Perun-ceral-Irumporai, the latter two being the heroes eulogised in the seventh and eighth decades of the Tamil Classic called *Pattuppattu*. Pannirselvam identified the three kings correspondingly with (1) Celvak-Kadungovali Atan, (2) Perunceral-Irumporai and (3) Ilan-ceral-Irumporai, the last of whom is the hero praised in the ninth decade of the above mentioned Classic. In the two inscriptions mention is made of three Kings i.e., (1) Ko Atan Cel (i.e., Ceral) Irumporai. (2) his son Perun-Kadungon and (3) his son Ilan-Kadungon. These three kings are equated with the three kings of the Tamil classics. On the contrary K. G. Krishnan[143] the well-known epigraphist disagrees with Mahadevan and Pannirselvam and remarks that these three kings mentioned in the two inscriptions are not known to Pattuppattu. According to him the occurrence of the name *Kadungon* in these inscriptions refer to the earliest Pandya King mentioned in the Velvikudi Plates who might have ruled sometime in the beginning of the 6th century and apparently translated into Sanskrit as Ugra which is met with also in the late Tamil classics. Krishnan assigns the inscription to the Second Century A.D. on the basis of palaeography. Evidently the kings cited in the *Pattuppattu* including Senguttavan have to be placed in the latter half or towards the close of the Second Century A.D. Further this date is confirmed by the Gajabahu Synchronism fixing Senguttavan in about the middle of the Second Century A.D.[144]

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143 Ibid., p.26.

144. The argument advanced in favour of the Gajabhau Synchronism by distinguished scholars like S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, K.G. Seshaier, V. Kanakasabai, K.K. Pillai etc. is the mention in *Silapathikaram* of Gajabahu and the Satakarnis as contemporaries of Sengutavan. Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai however advanced the view that 4th and 5th centuries A.D. represent the date of the Sangam classics (Annathe Keralam-Malayalam, page 28-30). He based his arguments on the formative *(Apabhramsa)* stage in the evoution of Tamil language. He is of the view that the Sangam works are the product of the last phase of the *Apabhramsa* period in Tamil literature. The references to the Gangas (Akam 44) the Banas (Akam 113, 226, 325) and the Kattis (Akam 44, 226, Kurunthokai 11) prove beyond doubt that those poems were written in or after 5th century. The *Akananuru*, *Purananuru* and *Pattinappalai*, not to speak of the epics, Silapathikaram and Manimekhalai which are slightly later in point of time, all refer to the commerce of Tamizhakom with the

Of late G. L. Hart of the University of Wisconsin in his dissertation has established that the six earliest anthologies can be reliably dated back to the second and third centuries A.D.[145]

1. Uthiyan Cheralatan

The first epoch in the history of Kerala as reflected in the earliest stratum of Tamil literature known as Sangam pertained to a period of 4 or 5 continuous generations at the most, say a period of 120 or 150 years. The Chera line of rulers of which almost a continuous genealogy is available shows the existence of two lines of rulers either connected by marriage or otherwise.

The earliest Chera monarch looming large in the annals of the Sangam literature is Uthiyan Cheral Atan. To him is attributed the founding of the Chera dynasty. This Chera King who is believed to have ruled *Circa* A. D. 130, is stated to be the hero of the first ten of *Pattuppattu* which has not come to

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wetern countries of the Graeco Roman world. The scholars like K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, L.D. Swamikannu Pillai and others agree that the date of Silappathikaram might be assigned to later periods. The active trade with the Yavanas, which name was first applied to Greek, then to the Romans and in due course to all foreigners is mentioned not only in Sungam classics but is also corroborated by the descriptions of Greek and Roman writers and Geographers of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. like Strabo, unknown author of the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, Pliny, Ptolemy, the hoards of Roman coins of Augusthus and Tiberius unearthed in South India reveal that during the period the Roman trde reached its pinnacle. The decisive piece of evidence regarding the date of Roman trade discovered from the finds at Arikamedu amply justified the references of trade relationship in the Tamil classics. Arikamedu is identified with the "Poduke of Ptolemy" Mortimer wheeler concluded that the pottery and the Arretine ware and Amphorae imported from Italy could be dated to 20-50 A.D. The testimony provided by Arikamede amply justified the statements of the European writes on the one hand and by the Sangam classics on the other. The contemporanity of Gajabahu rule between A.D. 173 and 195 also confirmed the probable date of the Sangam between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D. The Gajabahu Synchronism which provide the basic substratum of the Chronology of early Tamils must be viewed against this historical background (for details see A Social History of the Tamils Vol. I-IInd Edition, K.K. Pillai-Madras 1975 pp.103 to 10 and Kerala Charithram, Vol. I, Kerala History Association, Cochin-1973, pp.106-107).

145. Related Cultural and Literary Elements in Ancient Tamil and Indo-Aryan, Harvard university, 1969.

light. The Sangam poets have praised him as Cheralatan, Perum Cheralatan, Perumchottuthiyan. In Puram-2, Muranchiyoor Mudinagarayar sings in praise of the King as follows: "The sun rises in your Eastern sea and sets in your Western sea". This evidently points to the fact that he ruled over the whole of ancient Tamilnad. The epithet *Vana Varampan* (Beloved of the Gods) is also an appellation given to this King. There is a tradition that he fed sumptuously both the Pandavas and the Kourava armies of Kurukshetra and thereby earned the title "Uthiyan Cheral of the Great feed". This tradition is looked upon "as a conventional attribution to him of an achievement of some remote ancestor". The same honour is also claimed in other poems for the Pandyas and Cholas.[146]

Mamulanar has eulogised the military dexterity and generosity of this ruler. Uthiyan Cheral enlarged his territory by conquering other lands. Ilamkiranar and Kottamvalattu Thunchiya Makkothai also praise Uthiyan for his skill in the battle-field and generosity. "Streams roar just as the sound from the kitchen of the generous Uthiyan of Kuzhumur"; sings Makothai. Kuzhumur is probably somewhere in Kuttanad. This leads us to the conclusion that Kuttanad was the earliest seat of the Cheras. Probably the appellation Kuttuvan also might have come into vogue due to this association of the Cheras with Kuttanad. The victory of Uthiyan over the tribal chieftains of ancient Kerala might have led to the praise of Mamulanar in Akam[55].

Uthiyan bore the title of *Vanavarampan* which either means "Beloved of the Gods" or "one whose boundary is the sky". This title was used by his three grandsons also. A section of

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146 Currently, Archaeologists do not dispute the fact that the Mahabharatha War could have taken place earlier — not much later than the very beginning of the Ist Millenium B. C. as is being increasingly conceded on the basis of the archaeological investigations at Hastinapura and some other towns of like antiquity in the Western Gangetic Plain. So according to latest conclusions, these titles could indeed be a measure of a seemingly close contact that was afforded between the South and the North. It is also pertinent to note that Sangam Classics speak of concentration of Aryans in some towns of Tamilnad.

the scholars consider that Uthiyan was the Cheralatan who ashamed of the wound secured in his back by the sword of Karikalachola at Venni fasted to death facing north. In *Puram* (66) the poetess Vennikkuyattiyar refers to this incident in the following way: "Uthiyan in the battle-field of Venni faced the North and thus spread his fame the world over, greater than you who came of the royal line of the Cholas"? Paranar puts it thus; "the scandal concerning the hero and the Dancing Girl is louder than the noise of the Chola army on the day Karikalan defeated the 11 chieftains the Cheras and the Pandyas in the battle of Venni.'

Uthiyan was a generous patron of poets. Trade and commerce flourished in his days and foreign ships called at his ports.

He is known by appellations like Cheralathan, Perum Cheralathan and Perum Chottu Udayan. The place names Udayamperoor, Udiyancheral are said to be named after him. Udayamperoor seems to have been founded by him as an outpost against the Pandyas.[147] He strengthened his position by matrimonial alliances. He married the daughter of *Ayvel* whose kingdom lay between the Cheras and the Pandyas. Further he gave his daughter in marriage to Nannan I partly to extend his influence northwards and to wean him from his alliance from the pirates who preyed on the Roman ships coming to Muziris. We learn from the poems that he entrusted the task of suppressing the pirates to his elder son Imaya Varampan and the protection of the southern frontier to his younger son Palyanai. It is said that he made an attempt to seize the beryl mines in Punnad.

Nedum Cheralatan

On the death of Uthiyan Cheralatan his son Nedum Cheralatan came to the throne. He is referred to as Imaya Varampan and Kadumkko or Kudakko (King of Kudanad). Another surname of this King was Chelvak—Kadunk-ko-Vali Atan. According to *Pattuppattu* he was the son of Uthiyan Cheral by his wife

147. A History of Kerala—K. V. Krishna Iyer, 1965, Coimbatore, p. 44.

Nallini described as "Veliyan Venmal" Kumattur Kannanar and Mamulanar also refer to this King. Kannanar states that all kings from the Himalaya to Cape Comorin acknowledged his supremacy. In *Silapathikaram* also this event is referred to. It is said that he inscribed the bow *(Vel)* his emblem on the Himalayas and thus earned the title *Imaya Varampan* which means either beloved (Anpan) of the Gods (Imaiyavar) or friend and protector (Anpan) of the Cheras (Vanavar or Imaiyavar)[148] This appellation of the panegyrist of the King may be viewed as figment of poetic exaggeration though it sheds light on the campaigns of Nedum Cheralatan. It is clear that Nedumcheralatan fought some wars to expand his kingdom which the poetic imagination might have exaggerated.

He was evidently a mighty conqueror for he styled himself as the "Sovereign who had Himalayas as his boundary". The most formidable adversary Nedum Cheralathan had to contend with was the Kadambas of Banavasi or Gokarnam — Vanavasi region. In Pattuppattu the poet compares his victory against the Kadambas to that of Subramanya or Soora Padma—God of War. The second Ten of Pattuppattu and verses of Akananuru refer to the attack of Nedumcheralathan with his navy uprooting. the guardian tree of the Kadambas — Kadambu — and making war drums from the stump of the tree.[149]

The statement about the Kadambas proves that the period of Nedumcheralathan was not before the fourth century A.D. P. T. Sreenivasa Iyengar assigned the early Cheras to the 5th century A.D. on this basis.[150] Kadambas rose to power in the

148. According to Prof Elamkulam. Imayavar Ampan is one who is loved by the God (Devanam Priya). *Ampan* or *Appan* is meant by classical Tamil Grammarians as Father or Protector. Achankovil is the temple of Achan i. e., of *Appan* or Father The Father referred to is of Siva. *Ariyankavu* means Aryan's Guard. Aryan or Arya, i e., Hari Hara Putra, the common Tamil equivalent of whose name is Aiyanar supposed to be guardian of boundaries. *Kavu* is the Malayalam equivalent of the Tamil- *Kaval* Guard (A History of Tinnevelly, R. Caldwell, New Delhi, 1982, page 25)

149 Each tribe in those times has a separate guardian tree which is considerd as the flag of the State

150 History of Tamils, p. 501

South West of Deccan as result of the weakened position of the Pallava's after Samudragupta's invasion during the middle of the 4th century A.D.[151] Anyhow it is not possible to argue that the early Cheras flourished in the half of the 4th century A.D. In this context, it may be recalled that Kadambas might have existed as a small feudatory under the Satavahanas even before Mayurasarman rose to prominence. The Kadambas were a Brahmin family which derived its name from Hariti and belonged to the Manavya Gotra.[152] Lead coins with the horse device and inscribed with the name Hariti (a part of the name of the Chutas) have come to light from Cuddapah and Ananthapur districts and from inscriptions in Kanheri, Banavasi and Malavalli.[153] In all these cases we have only unrelated names which render the construction of a regular history of the Kadambas or other Kings and chieftains impossible. Also only outstanding figures and their achievements are reported by poets. So the Kadambas might. have existed as chieftains even before Mayuravaraman.

The conflict of Nedumcheralathan with the Yavanas[154] forms another subject for praise by the poets. In a formidable naval fight he captured some Yavanas. It might be recalled that his father entrusted the task of suppressing the pirates to him. In carrying out his assignment he turned first against Nannan of Ezhimala who was a close associate of the pirates. He drove him out of Puzhinad and occupied, Tindilam (Tundis of the Periplus), Nittur (Nitrias of Pliny) and Mantai (Mandagara of the Periplus and Madai of the present day). After his victory over Nannan, he proceeded against the pirates who had fled from Nittur to Kaineitai (of the Periplus). With the capture of Nittur, the sea became safe from pirates. Kodungallur seems

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151 A History of South India, K. A. Neelakanta Sastri, Madras, 1958, p. 105

152 Ibid, pp. 95—105.

153. Kerala Chanthram, Vol. I, Ernakulam, p. 114.

154. Yavanas are Greeks according to Dr. K. K. Pillai (A Social History of the Tamils f. n. 104) which name however was used in Kerala to denote not only Greeks and Romans but also for the Persians and the Arabs. Foreign migrants permanently settled in the West Coast were also referred to by the name. Nagarjunakonda Sanskrit inscription speaks of the Yavanas in the Tulu area South of Vanavasi.

to have flourished in trade during his time frequented by Egyptian and Roman ships. The punishment inflicted on the *Yavanas* was of exceptional severity as can be learnt from the poems. The pirates were paraded through the streets of Kodungalloor. The leader of the *Yavanas* was brought with his hands tied behind and ghee poured over his head. After this he was released exacting a huge ransom consisting of precious stones and jewels. Mamulanar gives a highly picturesque description of the large quantity of ornaments and precious stones got from the enemies heaped up on the coastal town of Mantai.

Nedumcheralathan's campaigns extended to the subjugation of seven lesser chieftains.[155]. He assumed the title of 'Ezhumudi Marpen . In a stanza addressed to the king by Kannanar, the poet describes him as wearing be decked with on his chest seven cornets. This evidently points his victory over the seven crowned chieftains. He reached the superior rank of an Adhiraja by his victories over the seven crowned kings.[156]

This king was killed in the battle of Por, the Chola king Velpaltadakkai Perumirakilli also dying in the same fight. Paranar says: "The two kings lie dead, their sandal pasted breasts pierced by spears".

We learn from *Pattuppattu* that Nedum Cheralathan ruled for 58 years both as crown prince and king.

The reign of Nedum Cheralathan was peaceful and prosperous. He gained the friendship of Karikala Chola by marrying his daughter Sonai. He was renowned for his hospitality and patronage of poets "Rains may fail but never the munificence of Cheralathan" and "the hands of thy bards are soft as they have no other work but to eat of boiled rice, roasted flesh and spiced mixtures" sings Kapilar complimenting this king.

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155 They are Auyaman or Nannan, Ai, Ay, Evvi, Kari, Ori and Pari. Seven powerful chieftains are referred to in the exploits of Velkezhu Kuttavan, Selvakkadumko Vazhiyathan, Atiyama, Nannan of Ezhimala, Nedumchezhiyan.

156. South Indian History op. cit p. 113

Palyanai Chelkezhu Kuttavan

Nedum Cheralathan was succeeded by his brother Palyanai Chelkezhu Kuttavan who is said to have ruled for 25 years. According to a section of the historians Palyanai never ascended the throne but remained *Yuvarajah* or heir apparent. He is the hero of Pattu-3 written by Palai Gautamanar. By conquering Kuttanad from the Pandyas even during his father Utiyan's reign he had won the title of *Kuttuvan*. He was a brave warrior who enlarged his kingdom by his conquests. He conquered the Ays and brought them under his control. He is called *Poozhiyarkon*, which suggests that he was the master of Puzhinadu. However the crowning achievement of Palyanai was the conquest of Kongunad in which attempt both his father and elder brother lost their lives. With the marriage of his son, Antuvan with Poraiyan Perun Devi, the heiress of Porainad he became the virtual ruler of Palghat. The Chera empire at this time extended upto the eastern sea. Poets say that water was brought from the seas in the east and west in a single day for his daily bath by a relay of elephants. It seems probable to assume that the entire region between Kodungallur and Kumari was under his control. It is said that *Palyanai* established a viceroyalty at Karuvur and appointed his son Antuvan as Viceroy to guard the berylmines of Punnad in Kongunad.

This warrior king in his last years became religious minded. It is said that the death of Antuvan, his son had led him to renounce all earthly pleasures and pomp. "Like Asoka after his war with Kalinga, Palyanai Chelkezhu Kuttuvan turned away from war and carnage and came under the influence of this spirit"[157]. He became greatly interested in religious sacrifices. He worshipped the Goddess **Kottavai** of Ayiraimalai. The war drum of the Kuttuvan was propitiated by the offerings of blood and toddy offered with *Mantras*. He was a great patron of poets and men of letters. He is said to have conducted ten *Yagas* under the superintendence of the Brahmin Poet Palai **Gautamanar.**

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157. Chera Kings of the Sangam age. K. G. Sesha Aiyar. pp. 15–16.

Narmudi Cheral

According to the fourth ten Narmudi Cheral ruled for 20 years. He was also known as Kalankaykanni Narmudi Cheral. An explanation of Kappiyanar of how he got this name is thus put: "He was wearing a crown made of Palmyra fibre, instead of a gold one, at the time of his coronation and used carrisa (Kalankay) fruit as the hangings on his crown in the place of pearls". He was the son of Neduncheralathan by Patuman Devi (the daughter of Patuman chieftain of Velavi)[158]. He was a brave and capable soldier. The outstanding conquest of his was against Neduman Anchi of Adigaman family. Neduman Anchi ruled over the whole of east Kongu including Salem. He was the patron of the poetess Avvai. It is said that the Adigaman was ally of the Tondaiman of Kanchi and Ori of the Kollimalais and that he had inflicted a severe defeat on Kari of Tirukkoyilur. By inflicting a crushing defeat on Adigaman, Nedumcheral made himself both feared and respected in Kongu[159]. Narmudi however forgave him and even reinstated him. This shows that he was always generous to the fallen foe. Another outstanding achievement of Nedumcheral was the attack on Nannan, the ruler of Ezhimalai. In the first battle against Nannan at Pazhi the Chera Commander, Ay Eyinan was killed. Narmudi Cheral thereupon proceeded against Nannan with a large army, fought many a battle spread over several years and defeated and killed Nannan in the famous battle of Vakaipperunthurai.

Narmudi was an ideal ruler and a generous patron of men of letters. Kappiyatt Kappiyanar was the chief poet who was patronised by the magnanimity and generosity of this ruler.

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158 Paduman Devi has been mistaken to be a sister of Imayavaramban Nedumcheralathan and it has been held that her son Narmudicheral became heir through the matrilineal line. But this interpretations is not borne out by available data. Paduman Devi was the wife and not the sister of Imayavaramban See Avvai Doraiswami Pillai. Pandai Nalai Chera Mannargal (Tamil), pp 116–117 Quoted by Dr. K. K. Pillai, A social History of Tamils, op. cit, p 393

159 There is a major section of scholars on South Indian History that hold the view that it was not the main line but the collateral branch of the Cheras, the family of the Irumporai that made inroads into the kongu country. See The Salem District Gazetteer (1969) pp. 47–48.

Narmudicheral is said to have been very devoted to the God of *Tiruvantapuram* whose *Arat* seems to have been performed by him with great zeal. In Stanza 31 Kapiyanar. describing the Chera country clothed by the seas and dotted with hills refers to the worship of Lord Vishnu and when the officiating priests ring their bells which send clear peals afar. the eager fasting multitude baths in the cold waters of the sea and bustling noise rends the air. the great *Chakra* of the Lord (Vishnu) dazzles everybody with its brilliance. the full--orbed moon rises dispelling the black darkness of the sea to gladden these multitudes on their way home. he says "even as the benefaction of the moon. Oh! Chera king. you come to the help of suffering men of high estate and rule valorously".

Velkezhu Kuttuvan

He is known as *Kadalpirakottiya Vel Kezhu Kuttuvan* Paranar in the 5th decade of the *Pattupattu*, describes him as "Kuttuvan" of the gold garland, whose army destroyed the beauty of many lands, till the noise rose loud of the drums used in numerous battles with the monarchs of the country between Cape Comorin on the South and the Himalayas, the mountain that rises high as the northern boundary. The grandiose title attributed to Kezhukuttuvan is the deliberate tendency among the Sangam poets to boast of a legendary supremacy over some of the Aryan kings of the North over *Aryavartha* in general though we might not entirely rule out, some tenuous links or transactions which the kings of Tamil country and of the North could have had in that period[160]. Vel Kezhukuttuvan assumed the title of

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160. See The Early History of Tamilnad—K. V. Soundara Rajan, Journal of Indian History, Vol. 56, XLVI, Part I, 1968. The reason for the triple Tamil Kingdoms showing a hazy mythical link with northern kingdom and at the same time not having been found to have crossed their own geographical territories in aggrandising campaigns in early history is to be searched for in the inevitable pattern of nucleating centres of balance of power that had been operating in different parts of South India in the period 300—1200 A D. The nucleating power centres were located in the deep South in the tri-junction of the Chera, Chola, Pandyan Kingdoms, in the traditional Kongu tract, in Lower Deccan in the Tungabhadra valley and in the upper Deccan in the Godavari-Narmada doab. Traditional rivalries of Tamil Kingdoms with

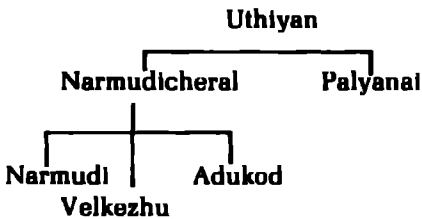
Kadalpirakottiya. It is suggested by some writers that he did this to proclaim a naval victory achieved by him. Paranar attributed this to the miraculous power of the king at whose throwing of the spear, the sea retreated backwards and the land came into existence. Perhaps this is reminiscent of some emergence of land from the ocean due to some geological factors or a reference to some simple sea festival. The invasion of Mokur near Punnad[161] was an important military triumph of Vel Kezhu Kuttuvan. The Mokur king Pazhaiyan was vanquished and war drum was carved out of his guardian tree, the *Vempu* or Veppu. The Chera army attacked Mokur to protect the chieftain called Arukai who was defeated by Pazhaiyan. Paranar describes that the sweet smelling hair of the Mokur women was tonsured and braided into a rope for binding elephants to the carts loaded with Vempu wood. The invasion of Mokur referred to in *Silapathikaram* has led some scholars to identify Vel Kezhu Kuttuvan with Cheran Senkuttuvan, the mythical hero of *Silapathikaram* who brought stone from the Gangetic plains to Muziris (Kodungallur) for the consecration of the Kannaki temple. But this identification is by no means credible. P.T. Sreenivasa Iyengar considers Velkezhu Kuttuvan and Senkuttuvan as entirely different personalities and observes "the exploits of Senkuttuvan described in the 3rd canto of Silapathikaram are as incredible as those of the hero of Paranar's ode are incredible". It has been established that *Silapathikaram* is a later work and mentions Ilan Cheral Irumporai who brought Chattukkapputham.

Adukodu Pattu Cheralathan

The poetess Kakkaipadiniyar Nacchellaiyar praises the achievements of this king in the sixth ten of the *Pattupattu*. This

palpably outside powers were kept more or less without conspicuous change or shift but within their own areas, changing of sides was as common as the changing of seasons. Ibid, p. 58.

161. /Aluva Kulasekhara of the 13th or 14th century assigned *Mogurnad* to his Aliya (nephew) Bankidevarma (Mangalore inscription S. I. VII No. 185, pp. 81–82). Is Mogur Mogurnad in Kasaragode? (Studies in Kerala History – Elamkulam, p. 145).

king was the younger brother of Narmudicheral. He is supposed to have ruled for 38 years. All the five kings, including this king and most of the succeeding rulers belong to 3 generations of the family of the Uthiyan cheral. It is probable therefore that these younger princes might have been ruling different parts of the kingdom as *Yuvarajas* or heir apparents. This practice was known as *Koottuvazhkai*. The historians classified these five rulers as the Vana Varampan line which is represented as follows.

According to the *Pathikom* this king derived the prefix Adukodu Pattu from his recovering the sheep carried away by marauders into the *Dandaka* forest. Another explanation is that this king was an expert in dancing *Tunangaikoottu* in the battlefield. This *kootu* was held in honour of those soldiers who firmly stuck to their posts, sedulously fighting the enemy. This ruler used to dance with sword in hand in the battlefield in the flush of victory. There is reference to this in 2—8—7 in the Sixth decade. We learn from the poem that he was a great warrior and lover of fine arts. High military ability, copious magnanimity and supreme goodwill are attributed to this king. He is said to have granted a whole village in Kuttanad to the Brahmins. Trade and commerce flourished on a large scale during his reign. He was the last king among the earlyCheras to use the title *Vanavarampan*.

Selvakkadunko Vazhiyathan

Kapilar, perhaps the greatest poet of the Sangam age and the author of the 7th decade of *Pattuppattu* describes the exploits of Selvakkadunko Vazhiyathan. The most outstanding accomplishment of this ruler was a victory over the combined

forces of the Cholas and the Pandyas. From *Purananuru* 13, we learn that he waged war against the Chola king *Mudittalaiko Perunarkilli*. He established new *gramas* or Brahmin villages in different parts of the kingdom. He performed many *yagas* also. His generosity as a patron of letters knew no bounds as may be gathered from the stanzas of Kapilar. The seat of this king was *Tondi*. He is said to have reigned for 25 years. He died at Chikkarapalli and hence he is sometimes referred to as *Chikkarappalli Tunjiya* Selvakkadunko. He married a countess of the family of Velman—Avikko. He was a contemporary of Nedunchezhian, the Pandyan king.

A pertinent point to be noted is that Selvakkadunko was the first king with whose name the title of Irumporai is used. It is said that the title of Irumporai was inherited by him from his mother and the title of Cheraman from his father Antuvancheral. We learn from Sangam works that the Nilgiris, Wynad and Kollimalai were all under the rule of Poraians. The kings of Kottayam at a later period were called *Poraikizhar*. The line of the Cheras who ruled with their headquarters at *Tondi* might have been the Irumporai line of the original Chera family group. It is clear that the Chera kingdom must have been a sort of family estate in which all the grown ups had a share and interest. There were three collateral lines in the Chera family group viz. the Cheral, the Irumporai and the Makotai. These lines might hve ruled with different capitals. We do not have any definite information about the Makotai line of rulers. It is held by some historians that in the Pukazhur inscriptions there is reference to Atan Cheral Irumporai. This king is identified by some historians as Selvakkadunko Selvakkadunko is referred to by Paranar as Poraiin Kadunko and Karuvur Eriya Perumcheral Irumporai. His son was also called Perumcheral Irumporai; Perumcheral Irumporai son was Ilancheral Irumporai. He was succeeded by Yanaikka-tchey Mantaram Cheral Irumporai or the Chera of the Elephant-look in whose time Karur became the capital of the Kongu Cheras[162]. The Cheras were all patri-lineal and they entered into matrimonial relations only with patrilineal families. That is how Selvakkadunko bore the name of his mother's family. In

162. Salem District Gazetteer, 1969, Madras, p. 47.

short the Irumporais represent members of the original Chera *dynasty with the same right of succession according to seniority as the others eventhough they constituted a separate branch.* The poet Perumkunrur Kizhar depicts Ilancheral as "descended from heroes like Senguttuvan who drove the sea back by throwing his spear of Perumcheral, who drove Kazhuvul out of his lair, of Narmuti who drove back the Yavana cavalry, swift as the wind and cut down the Vakai tree of Nannan and of Palayani who propitiated the goddess of Ayirai Hill by offering rice mixed with the blood of the enemies". According to Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai *Porai* means mountain. *Irum Porai* means big mountain[163]". K.V. Krishna Iyer interprets the word Irumporai as a compound of *Irum* (firm or firmly seated) and *Porai* as Chief of Porainad[164]. The view of K.G. Sesha Aiyer that the *Irumporais* were in the position of Chera Viceroys with palatine power stationed in the North Chera country with headquarters at *Tondi*[165] seems to be more reasonable for during later periods, the Kottayam rulers were called *Poraikizhar*.

Perumcheral Irumporai

Selvakkadunko Vazhiyathan was succeeded by his son Perumcheral Irumporai. This king is the hero of the 8th decade of Pattuppattu written by Arisilkizhar who was his minister. He became famous as the victor of Tagadur. He was a remarkable ruler who is said to have captured Karuvar (Karur) and defeated Adigaman, Elini and two other chieftains at Tagadur (Dharmapuri). This Adigaman ruled over the whole of East Kongu including Salem. It is said that Adigaman was a close associate of the Tondaiman of Kanchi and Ori of the Kollimalai and that he had inflicted a severe defeat on Kari of Tirukkoylur. By inflicting a crushing defeat on Adigaman, Perumcheral made himself feared throughout Kongu. There is a vivid description of this event which celebrates the first entry of the Chera power into Kongu in a later poetical work *Tagadur Yathirai*. In Purananuru

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163. Studies in Kerala History, p. 148.

164. A History of Kerala, p. 69.

165. Chera kings of the Sangam Age, p. 35.

the poetess Avvaiar describes the valour of this chieftain and the terror which he instilled in the hearts of the neighbouring chieftains[166]. A section of the scholars contend that the reference *to Elini as one of the ancestors of Adigaman in the Tenimalai inscription of Vidukadalagiya Perumal, a later chieftain of the 8th century A.D, that this chieftancy was itself a Chera chieftancy since Elini or Yavanika* was of Chera royal birth. It is clear that not only Adigaman but even Ori of Kollimalai had very strong Chera connections. Even in several poems of the Sangam age Adigaman is mentioned as *Malavar Perumagan* or leader of the Malavar. The war of Cheraman Perumcheral was on account of the insatiable ambition of the chieftain who was not contented with the offer of a certain territory from the East of Cauvery Southwards to Namakkal--which the Chera offered him as his kingdom. It is said that the title of Tagadur Erintha Perum Cheral Irumporai was conferred on Perum Cheral after his victory over Thagadur. He soon became the Lord of East Kongu, the Malakongam and the Kuthiramalai. He also defeated Kari of Tirukollur. Arasil Kizhar further describes Perumcheral as the Lord of Pukar besides being the Lord of Puzhinad, Kollimalai and Kuthiraimalai. This reference probably points out the encounter of Perum Cheral with the Cholas and his occupation of the Chola capital Pukar[167]. Irumporai also defeated the *Yadava* (shephered) chieftain Kazhuvul.

Perumcheral was generous and pious. He lavished his generosity on the foreign merchants who bartered gold coins

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166. This probably accounts for the title of *Pukarselvam* to Perumcheral Irumporai.

167. Intensely personal and throbbing with grief, the poem reminds us of the elegy written by Browning on Mrs. Browning. "Those who see thy brigades of war elephants marching with their tusks blunted by battering thy enemies' forts, renew the strong bars with which the gates of their forts are bolted; those who see thy troops of horse whose hoofs are covered by the blood of their foes whom they have trampled to death block the entrances to their fort with stout thorny trees; those who see thy sharp lances, which pierce the hardest shields, those who see thy fierce soldiers, who bear on their body many a scar caused by sword cuts, waste not the arrow from their quivers; and thou not deterred by the poisonous smoke of the seeds of the *iyyavi*, which thy enemies burn at their fort gates to keep off your army, seize and kill them like the god of death. Alas, who can save the fertility of thy enemies, whose fields are covered with waving corn?"

and horses for pepper and other articles. He was highly learned and erudite. There is a citation by Arisil Kizhar that the king advised his Brahmin priest on Dharma and converted him into a recluse; *This leads us to the conclusion that by his time Hinduism had exercised a potent influence on Chera kings.* The prolific reference to sacrifices as devices to win victories in battle and for attainment of salvation and grants to Gods and Brahmins, pinpoint to the strict adherence of the tenets of the Hindu Dharmasastras. But *Chathurvarnya* does not seem to have come into vogue during that period. The patronage of the kings given to the Pana poets of the time testify to this conclusion. Kapilar, a Pana by birth stated to have embraced Brahminism is another indicator.

Ilam Cheral Irumporai

Perum Cheral was succeeded by Ilam Cheral who is celebrated in the 9th decade of *Pattupattu* by Perumkunrur Kizhar. He was the son of Perum Cheral. His mother was Antuvan Chellai. Arisil Kizhar also refers to the birth of this king when he describes the Puthrakameshti Yaga performed by Perum Cheral Irumporai's beautiful wife, Perumthevi Antuvan Chellai to get a son endowed with qualities of kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, politeness and well—versed in kingly duties and with deep scholarship. Eventhough it is stated that he ruled for 16 years, we can not say definitely whether it was in his capacity as crown prince or as full fledged ruler.

He defeated Perum Chola, Ilam Palayan Maran and the Chieftain Vicchi and destroyed five forts. It is to be noted here that by this time the political environs of South India is marked by a conflict between the three great rulers of South India, the Chera, Chola and the Pandyas. All the wealth captured from the enemies was distributed to the Panas and Viralis[168] at the capital of Vanchi. Ilam Cheral is referred to by the various titles *Kongarkovai, Kuttuvarerai,* and *Puzhiyarkovai which indicate* that he was the ruler of Kongunad, Kuttanad and Puzhinad

168. The Panas were great scholars of the time. Kapilar was originally a Pana and it was later that he became a Brahmin. The women folk of the Panas were known as Viralis or Paattis who were well versed in dance and music.

respectively. It is said that he brought the image of *Chatushkabhum* from Pukar and installed it at Kodungallur. *Silappadhikaram* on the other hand records that this installation took place during the rule of Senguttuvan. It is probable that Ilam Cheral might have been at the time only a crown prince.

Joint Rule

The foregoing accounts of the Chera rulers are based on the available eight tens of *Pattuppattu*. Only some lines of the tenth decade are extant. Some historians presume that Yanaikanchey Mantaran Cheral Irumporai is the hero of this decade and that he succeeded Ilam Cheral as ruler. The other Sangam works also mention the name of this ruler and some other Chera rulers like Palai Perum Kadumko, Antuvan Cheral etc. Some Scholars hold the view that there were three distinct and independent branches of the Cheras ruling with their capitals at Vanchi, Mantai, and Tondi respectively. This view does not find acceptance among scholars. The pattern of succession that was in vogue in ancient Chera country according to Somasundara Bharathi was matrilineal[169]. But this view has been disapproved by scholars like Raghava Iyengar[170]. According to him the colophons of *Pattuppattu* may be interpreted in two different ways, the first supporting the matrilineal as well as the patrilineal patterns of succession and the second giving indisputable proof from internal evidences to show that patriliny was the only pattern of succession that existed in the ancient Chera royal house. The poet Arisil Kizhar eulogises the consort of the Chera king, Perum Cheral Irumporai as the noblest woman who had bequeathed worthy sons to ascend the throne of her husband. However Sangam literature does not give any clear evidence in favour of other forms of succession. According to K.G. Sesha Iyer there were only two lines of Cheras, one ruling in Vanchi and other in *Tondi*. Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan

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169. The colophons of *Pattupattu* verses.

170. Cheran Shenkuttuvan by Raghava Iyengar.

Pillai is of the view that there was only one Chera line of rulers notwithstanding the fact that some members might have lived in different places such as *Vanchi, Tondi, mantai, karavur* etc. He propounds the view that according to the collateral system of succession among the early Cheras the eldest member of the family ascended the throne irrespective of the place of residence.

In attempting to construct the genealogy of the Chera kings, the line beginning with Antuvan Cheral and 3 generations after him are to be assigned to the periods of Nedum Cheralathan and his sons. The first six songs of *Pattupattu* deal with the sons and grandsons of Udiyancheral. The next three tens describes Selvakkadunko, his son and grandsons. We learn from the Sangam literature that Antuvan Cheral of Karuvur was the father of Selvakkadunko. It was Palyanai Chelkezhu Kuttuvan who conquered Kongunad for the first time during the reign of Nedum Cheralathan. Later Olvalko Perumcheral Irumporai might have annexed Karuvur on the banks of the Amaravathy. Prof. Elamkulam is of the view that Olvalko Perumcheral was probably Antuvan Cheral himself[171] as may be testified from the reference to Autuvan Cheral residing at Karuvur in the *Purananuru* by Mudamosiyar. If Olvalko Perumcheral was not the same person as Antuvan Cheral, then his period also must be assigned to the time of Nedum Cheralathan and Palyanai Chelkezhu Kuttuvan. Here the pertinent point to be borne in mind that as was wont among the Cholas and Pandyas, the system of joint rule [172] had been prevalent among the Cheras also. Thus there were two branches of the Chera dynasty viz., the *Vana Varampan* line and the Poraivan's line. The eldest member among the branches became the ruler. The practice was known as *Mutukuru Vazhkai*. The others ruled as crown princes in various parts of the country. The following is the Chera geneaology as given by Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai.

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171. Studies in Kerala History, p. 151.

172. The term *Kootta Vazhchai* in Malayalam means joint rule.

The Chera Genealogy

Vanavar anpans	*Poraiyans*
Uthiyan Cheral	Antuvan Cheral
Nedum Cheral	Selvakkadunko
Palyanai	
Narmudi Cheral	Perum Cheral
Velkezhu Kuttuvan	Ilam Cheral
Adukod Pattu Cheralathan	
Senior Rulers	*Junior Rulers*
Uthiyan Cheral	Antuvan Cheral
Nedumcheralathan	Palyanai
Selvakkadunko (?)	Narmudicheral
Velkezhu Kuttuvan	Perumcheral
Ilam Cheral (?)	Adukod Pattu Cheralathan

The geneaology of the Cheras constructed on the basis of the colophons of the Sangam poets by earlier writers like K.G. Sesha Iyer, V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, Poornalingam Pillai etc. cannot be accepted in toto in the light of the above reconstruction by Prof. Elamkulam.

Some other Chera Kings—Yanai Kanchey Mantaran Cheral Irumporai

The Sangam works also reveal the names of some other Chera rulers. One of the most important of them was Yanai Kanchey Mantaran Cheral Irumporai. The Ilam Cheral was probably succeeded by Yanai Kanchey Mantaran Cheral Irumporai. He might probably have been the son of Ilam Cheral and the hero of the 10th decade of Pattunpattu The title Yanaikkanchey came from the king's resemblance to an elephant. This Chera king of the elephant look is praised for his just and

beneficient administration and extensive foreign contacts. He is described in *Purananuru* as the ruler of Kollimalai and the Lord of *Tondi* with sea—coasts covered with sands and rich in paddy fields and coconut gardens. Ilam Kiranar describes about his victory in the battle of Vilankil. But it was during his time that the first check to the Chera rule in Kongu came. He often fought the Pandyan King Nedumchezhiyan and the Cola King Perunarkilli and won several victories over them. But in the end he was himself defeated and taken captive at the famous battle of Talayalankanam and his Velir[173] allies were killed.

It is said that Karur became the Chera capital during his time[174]. However Mantaran managed to escape and regain the lost freedom. Nevertheless by the time of Mantaran the political scene in South India had changed and the Chera power began to decline. It is to this changed condition that the poet Kurum Kozhiyur Kizhar highlights in a description of a visit to the kingdom of Mantaran Cheral.

> "Having heard that the kingdom ruled by thee
> is like a paradise on earth, came and my eyes
> are gladdened. Ever active thou leadest
> thy armies into foreign lands eager to conquer
> and to earn a deathless fame"

Mantaran Cheral was greatly interested in poetry and the collection known as *Ainkurunuru* was compiled at his command by Kudalur Kizhar.

After Mantaran, the Chera kingdom began to decline. The names of some kings like Illan Kuttuvan who bemoans the suffering of a faithless wife who deserted him at midnight with

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173. The chieftain Vel Avi was the ruler of Pothini (Modern Palani). *Pattuppattu* tells us that Nedumcheralathan and Selvakkasunko had married the daughters of the chieftain. The Veli chieftains consisted of six families. There is a section of the scholars equating Velir with the Kalabhras some others consider them as the progenitors of the Vellalas, the agricultural caste of modern times.

174. The Kongu country. *p-69.*

an unknown stranger[175]. Another was King Kottambalani Makotai also a good poet. Losing all interests in life with the death of his wife he managed his duties with the help of his ministers. *Kanaikkal Irumpora* was a contemporary of the Chola King Chenganan. *Nattinai* says that this king defeated the chieftain Muvan pulled out his teeth and had it set on the door of his fort at Tondi. The details of the demise of the king are unknown. There is the reference to a Chera ruler connected with the battle at Tirupperpuram fought by the Chola king Chenganan. This Chera king was taken prisoner and interned at Kunavayilkottam. But he was released at the intervention of the poet Poykaiyar, the author of *Kalayazhi Narpatu*. It is said that this king died of starvation before his release. In *Purananuru* there is the reference to another Cheraman who defeated in Kongunad by Killivalavan flew to his distant capital at Vanchi for safety closely pursued on his heels by the victor. Palaipadiya Perumkadumko has been described in Purananuru by poetess Peymakal Illavyini a famous ruler of Vanchi. It is said that 10 songs of *Nattinai* and *Kurumthokai* 12 of *Akananuru* and 30 of *Kalithokai* are his exquisite composition This king occupies a place of honour among the Sangam poets

Other Chera rulers of Karuvur

Two inscriptions from Pugalur in the Tiruchirappalli District. Tamilnad discovered and copied as No. 349 of 1927 – 28 and No. 297 of 1927 28 by the Epigraphical Branch of the Archaeological survey of India reveal the names of three kings not known to the Pattuppattu. They are: Atan, Perun Kadungon and Ilan Kadungon[176]. Iravatham Mahadevan assigning these inscriptions

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175 Puram 22. Akam 153

176. Studies in South Indian History and Epigraphy, K. G. Krishnan, pp. 24–27, Madras 1981, No. 349 of 1927–28.
 1 ....ta Ammannan Yarrur Cenkayapan urai-y

to the 3rd and 4th centuries A. D. records the names of Chera kings of three generations namely (1) Ko Atan Cheral Irumporai (2) Perunkadungo and (3) Ilan Kadungo and identified them with (1) Anduvan Cheral Irumporai (2) Selvakkadunkovaliyatan and (3) Perum Cheral Irumporai, the latter two being the heroes of the seventh and eight decades of the *Pattuppattu*. On the other hand Pannirselvam identified the three kings with (1) Selvakkadunko Valiyatan, (2) Perum Cheral Irumporai and (3) Ilam Cheral Irumporai, the last of whom is the hero of ninth decade of *Pattuppattu*.[177]. But K. G. Krishnan challenges the validity of this identification. According to him the Kings in the inscription (1) Ko Atan Cheral Irumporai consists of the personal name Atan, the dynastic name Cheral and the family name Irumporai, (2) Perum kadungon, consists the epithet *Perum* and the personal name Kadungon and (3) Ilam Kadungon contains the epithet Ilam and the personal name Kadungon. Thus the personal names of three successive kings of Irumporai family worked out by him are as follows:

Atan
|
Perum - Kadungon
|
Ilam -- Kadungon

On palaeographic basis, Krishnan assigns the inscription to the second century A. D. He is of the view that since the kings of the inscription could not be identified with any one of the kings in the *Pattuppattu* including Senkuttuvan, they have to be placed towards the close of the second century.

2. Ko Atan Cellirumporai makan
3. Perunkadunkon makan (I) lan
4. Kadunko (i) lanko aka arutta kal

No. 297 of 1927–28

1. ....to mana.....Yarru Cenka......
2. Ko A.....llirumpurai makan Perun
3. Kadunkon makan Kadunkon (i) lan-kadun
4. Ko (i) lanko aka arupita kal

177. For details see Proceedings of the First International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies, Vol. I, pp. 421–425.

VII VANCHI, THE CHERA CAPITAL

A probe is necessary at this juncture regarding the location of the capital of the Early Cheras on the basis of the evidence available in the Sangam Literature. It mentions that the early Cheras lived at Vanchi. *Tondi*. and *Karuvur*. *Manthai*. *Naravu* and *Kuzhumur* are also mentioned as seats of the Cheras. In the first instance Vanchi the capital city of the ancient Cheras has to be identified and located. There has been an unending discussion among the scholars in locating this ancient city. Raghava Iyengar, Ramachandra Dikshitar and Caldwell have identified it with the modern town of Karur, on the banks of the Amaravati, a tributary of the Kaveri in the Tiruchirappally district in Tamilnadu "Karoura" says Caldwell "is mentioned in Tamil traditions as the ancient capital of the Chera, Kera or Kerala kings, and is generally identified with Karur, an important town in the Coimbatore District originally included in the Chera kingdom It is situated on the left bank of the river Amaravati a tributary of the Kaveri, near a large fort now in ruins. Karur means the black town and I consider it identical with Karagam and KaJaram, names of places which I have frequently found in inscriptions in the Tamil country, and which are evidently the poetical equivalents of Karur. The meaning of each of the names is the same- "Ptolemy's word represents the Tamil name of the place with perfect accuracy, Kar means Black, and *Ur* (some times pronounced Ur-U), a town. Neither of these words seems to have altered in the least in sound or signification for 1800 years[178]. The argument of Caldwell that simply because *Karuvur* and *Karur* sound similarly they cannot be equated. K. N. Sivaraja Pillai and V Kanakasabhai have suggested Trikkarivur as the old Vanchi Kanakasabhai says "The site of the town is now a deserted village, known as Tiru—Karur. 3 miles from Kothaimangalam and 28 miles east by north of Cochin, where the remains of an old temple and other massive buildings are still visible[179]. K.G Sesha Iyer and S. Krishnaswami

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178. A comparative Grammer of the Dravidian Languages, Introduction, pp. 96—97, New Delhi, 1981.

179 Tamils 1800 years ago. p-15

Iyengar identify Vanchi as Tiruvanchikulam near Kodungallur. In this connection it is pertinent to note that Adiyarkku-Nallar, the commentator of the *Silapathikaram* also identified Karuvur with Tiruvanchikulam near the mouth of the river Periyar. Ptolemy places Karuvur much higher up the river Periyar. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai is of the view that Tiruvanchikulam rose to prominence only a little before 800 A. D. as a part of Mahodayapuram, the capital of the later Chera kingdom. The place was spoken of as Tiruvanchikulam till about the 14th century. *Anchaikalam* became *Anchakkalam* in the 14 th century. *Kokasandesa*, a work written about 1400 A. D. uses the form Tiruvanchakkala m. The name Tiruvanchikulam is still a later modification. The attempt to take out the word Vanchi from Tiruvanchikulam and identify it as the Vanchi of the Sangam age appears to be untenable. An old commentary to Purananuru and the Tamil dictionaries Divakaram and Pingala, give the meaning of Vanchi as Karuvur but there is no evidence to prove that Tiruvanchikulam ever bore the name of Karavur. The view of Kanakasabhai and others that Trikkariyur was Vanchi does not suggest to reason as Trikkariyur is situated far away from the Periyar near Kothamangalam. The majority of the Tamil historians aver that the ancient Vanchi is the present Karur in Tiruchirappally District. The fact that Karur and the name Vanchi has been substantiated by them by citing the Chinnamanur inscriptions of the early 10th century A D. referring Vanchi on the northern bank of the Ponni. Ponni is the Kaveri. A record of the 13th regnal year of Kulottunga Chola III the Tirumul temple at Neruvur reads *Vanchimana Karamana Karuvur*. The Karur inscription given in the Mackenzie manuscript is "*Virakeralamandalathu Tiruvanchimanakaramana Mudivazhanku Chozhapurathu*". There is a usage *Kongu Vanchi* meaning Vanchi of Kongunad. There are references in other contexts also to Karuvur *Vanchimanakaramana*. The above facts go to show that Karuvur was also called Vanchi. It is certain that Vanchi was the chief city of the Cheras

It was referred to as *Vanchimuthur Muthur* means ancient or prominent town. In identifying Vanchi with any modern township the location of the Chera capital should be sought to be in a strategic position within the Chera kingdom. Hence it follows that it could not but be in the West Coast. It may also

be noted that the Kongu country in which Karur was situated came under the Chera monarchy only with the invasion of the country by Nedum Cheralathan and his brother Palyanai. Another pertinent proposition arises as to the position of Karur when Kongunad was ruled by kings other than Cheras. Vanchi is mentioned in the classics to have been situated on the banks of the river Aan Porunai. In Purananuru there is a referenceto the Chera king who like a coward shut himself up in his capital while the sound of the felling trees with the long handled axe whose edge was sharpened by the blacksmith's file on the sandy banks of *Porunai* where young girls wearing bracelets and jingling ankle- rings used to play with *kalachi* nuts of golden colour echoed in his palace within the fortified walls. *Porunai* is identified with river Periyar. During later epochs the same place was the capital of the Cheras but with different names Makkotaipuram, *Ancaikkalam* etc. located near Kodungallur. So for all historical purposes the only feasible way out is to locate Vanchi in the vicinity of Kodungallur. Though references by Adiyarku Nallar, the commentator of *Silappadhikaram* and the author of *Kokasandesa* of the 15th century and Chekizhar, the author of *Periyapurana*. and the author of *Abhidhana Chintamani* about the Kodungallur Tiruvanchikulam areas as the capital of the Cheraman Perumals refer to a later epoch, they all believed that Vanchi, the capital of the early Cheras was situated on the West Coast near Kodungallur It is also probable that during the hey day of Chera hegemony over the Kongunadu, the Cheras might have preferred to live in Karur and named it after their capital *Karuvur* or Vanchi- Karuvur. With the passage of time, *Karuvur might have become* Karur.

It was Prof Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai who first asserted that Vanchi was *Karupadanna* near Kodungalloor. Based on certain contemporaneous Tamil literary works Prof. Elamkulam P N Kunjan Pillai[180] infers that the Chera capital Vanchi

180. P 160– 162 – Vanchi – the Chera Capital in Studies in Kerala History, 1970. *National Book Stall, Kottayam.*
T. K. Krishna Menon writes: "The very order, in which the seaports of the Cera kingdom are mentioned by Ptolemy, would suggest that his Karoura, is the Karur-pattana near Cranganur or Tiruvanjikkulam of the Malabar Coast (See Vanci Problem – Bulletin of the R. V. R. I. Jan 1940 Vol. VIII Part. I.

corresponds to present day Karurpadanna, 5 ot 8 miles north of Cranganore. - These works are *Pattuppattu*. *Purananuru* and *Kalavazhinarpatu*. But this view has been strongly disputed and does not find acceptance among other historians chief of whom are R. Raghava Iyengar and M. Raghava Iyengar. To Prof. Elamkulam, Vanchi became the capital of Cheras as the nerve centre of their campaign to conquer Kongunad, which was duly accomplished. The duration of this effort lasted for more than two generations. Ptolemy's observations are cited to substantiate the argument that Karur or Karurpadana was the Chera capital. To accentuate his contention, Prof. Elamkulam cites the lack of any archaeological evidence in the form of inscriptions to prove that Karur was not the Chera capital. The evidence of the Brahmi inscription and Roman coins propounded by M. Raghava Iyengar does not find favour with him. "Beyond all doubt the Chera capital Karur or Karurpadana, was a city of Tamil country".

All this uncertainty, highlights the need for a thorough going enquiry into this unresolved riddle of the Chera capital.

Of late new evidences have come to light and further examination of *Karuvur Vanchi* becomes necessary. The Arnattarmalai epigraph of Pugalur read by Iravatham Mahadevan throws fresh light into this riddle in South Indian History. Arnattarmalai is about 12 Kms. away from Pugalur in the modern Karur in Tiruchirappally district. Natural caverns with rock-beds bearing *Damili* inscriptions and gift of abodes of Jaina ascetics are found in this record. The main epigraph records the gift of abodes to a *Sraamana, Senkayapan of Yarrur village* by the Chera prince Ilam Kadungo I,his epigraph assignable to

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Herr A. Clemens Schoener, in his *Dravida and Dravidian Culture opines that* the Dravidic place—name, Karoura appears in the ancient district Cana in Asia Minor. His keen observation on the Malabar Karoura of Ptolemy is as follows: "The Malabar Karoura of Ptolemy is the modern Karuppatana. A place called Karuri exists in Telugu *desa* to miles south of Guntakkal. Better known is the Tamil place Karuri on the Amaravati, a settlement and the seat of the Cheras, therefore also termed *adhipuri*. Roman coins of the period of Tiberius were dug out here. The widespread name Karur means "embryoina city", new settlement". (See R. V. R. I. Bulletin No. 4, 1936, page - 9).

the second century on palaeographic grounds mentions three generations of the Cheras. The names of the Chera Kings and such names as Pittan, Korran, Kiram and Ori in the inscription also occur in the Sangam literature. Further a short inscription in Tamil language and Brahmi characters of about 2 century A. D. refers to a gold merchant from Karuvur. The antiquity of the place is thus established. The expression *Karuvur Vanci* met with in later inscriptions therefore might have evolved as a result of the association of the Cheras after their conquest of this area. It has already been stated that the earliest reference of the conquest of Kongu was by Palayanai Sel Kezhukuttuvan[181], one of the early kings among the Cheras

Recently the Tamilnad State Department of Archaeology has discovered two hero-stone inscriptions one in Tamil and the other in *Vattezhuthu* belonging to the 8th century A D The Tamil inscription reads *Ko Kaliyan magan Karuvuridai tan anirai kolai erindu pattan* viz. The son of king Kaliyan fell in Karuvur while rescuing his cattle The first line of the *Vattezhuthu* inscription lays down *Sri Vanci Vel Adiyan* i.e., the servant of Vanchivel[182] The fact that both these epigraphs of the 8th century A D. give the name of the City, as Karuvur and Vanchi go to establish the antiquity of the place Another inscription in the Pasupatisvara temple of Karuvur assignable to the 12th century A D. refer to Karuvur as Vancimanagar as also the epigraph of almost the same period found in Nerur about 4 miles from Karur[183] All these epigraphic references establish that the modern Karuvur in Tiruchirappalli was called Karuvur and Vanchi in ancient times Copper plate charters of the Pandyas of the 8th century refer to the city as **Karuvur** and Vanchi According to Madras museum Plates, the Pandya King Parantaka Nedunjataiya fought with Atiya at Ayiraveli Ayilur and Pugalur The Kadava and Kerala who came to the help of

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181 K. G. Krishnan opp cited p 28

182 Karur Inscriptions ARE 1927–28 quoted by R. Nagaswamy in his article Karuvur – Vanchi in Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. I, Part IV, 1974, Trivandrum p-396

183 Ibid., 397.

Atiya were defeated. The Dalavaypuram plates mention that Varaguna defeated the Kadava at Karavur. The Pandyas however lost Karuvur to the Pallavas, for *Thirumangai* in his hymns says Pallava Nandi conquered the Pandya at Karuvur[184]. Large hoards of Roman-coins unearthed in and around Karuvur - over thousand from Karuvur itself—prove beyond doubt that it was the metropolis of foreign trade in the early years of the Christian era.

The Archaeological Survey of India in collaboration with the Kerala State Department of Archaeology carried out excavations in an extensive area around Kodungalloor in places like Ceraman Parambu.Tirukkulasekharapuram, Balaganesvaram. Mathilakam, Karurpadana etc. in 1969—70[185]. The cultural materials discovered from these places show a well-developed and integrated cultural stage only right from 7th—8th century A. D. A very revealing archaeological phenomenon which came to light was that the sites near Karupadanna much speculated upon by Dr. S. K. Iyengar and Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai as Karur alias Vanchi was completely devoid of any cultural deposits. On the other hand the excavations conducted by the Tamilnad Archaeological Department under the direction of Nagaswamy[186] at Karur has yielded a number of Roman amphora pieces, copper coins with Roman characters which indicate that the place was occupied from the dawn of the Christian Era.

Viewed against the above background, one is led to believe that there is truth in the reference of Ptolemy that the capital of the Cheras was in the interior and evidently refers to the modern Karur in Tiruchirappalli. We have already seen that Palyani Selkelukkuttuan was the earliest Chera monarch who conquered Kongu and as a consequence of the expansion of the Cheras to the East Coast, they might have felt the necessity to have a secondary capital for which Karuvur in Tiruchirappally might have been located. It is quite probable that to

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184. Divya Prabandham of Thirumangai — on Paramesvara Vinagar, quoted by Nagaswamy, opp. cited p - 397.

185. Indian Archaeology — A Review 1968—69 and 1969—70.

186. Ibid, opp. cited, p-398.

commemorate their original habitat at Vanchi on the West *Coast, they might have named this place* also as Vanchi. The epithet *Karur–erintha ohalko Peruncheral Irumporai and the* Chera origin of the Adigaiman Chiefs of Dharmapuri (*Purananuru*) *also confirm the probability for the creation of a second capital* at Kuruvur. The nearly contemporaneous reference to Karuvur of *Kodai* (Chera) along with *Urandi* of the Cholas and Kudal of Valudi confirm the contention that Karur was the secondary capital of the Cheras during the early centuries of the Christian era. Krishnan is of the view that the kings mentioned in the Pugalur inscriptions were obviously the last few rulers of Karuvur known to us from epigraphy and also partly from literature. An examination of the vexed question of Vanchi against the above background will reveal that with Karavur as the secondary capital, the Chera territorry extended upto the West through the Palghat Gap to the important port of Muziris on the West Coast in the early two or three centuries of the Christian era.

VIII KERALA DURING SANGAM PERIOD

We have already surveyed the geographical setting of Kerala during the Sangam Age. The milleu of Kerala, as part of Tamilnad, is gleaned in the extant literature of Tamil known as Sangam. Sangam means an academy of poets that flourished for a time under royal patronage of the Pandyan kings with their capital at Madura, in South India[187]. It is said that there were three Sangams or assemblage of poets founded by the Pandyan kings. The body of literature known as Sangam works form anthologies and individual poems. The total number of Sangam poems according to some scholars is 2,389 including invocatory pieces. The Commentary on *Iraiyanar Agapporul* (Circa A.D. 750) refers to three Sangams which lasted at intervals for 9,990 years altogether and counted 8,598 poets (including a few gods of *saiva* persuasion) as members and 197 Pandyan kings as patrons[188]According to the Tamil tradition, the earliest of the three literary academies was attended by Gods and legendary sages and all its works are extinct. Of the second, there survives only the early Tamil prescriptive grammer and poetics *Tolkappiyam*. The poets of the third Sangam wrote the eight anthologies popularly known as *Ettuttokai* as well as a number of other works. Some scholars have questioned this tradition and opined that *Tolkappiyam* attributed to the second Sangam was certainly of later origin than the poems of the Third Sangam[189]. These assemblies were the fountainhead of the Tamil Culture,

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187 It is claimed that the seat of the first Sangam was in the now submerged Southern Madura and that it lasted for 4,440 years, the second Sangam was shifted to Kapatapuram where it continued for 3,700 years; later on Kapatapuram had to be vacated on account of the inroads of the sea and the third Sangam was started in Modern Madura.

188. A History of South India, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, P-111, Madras, 1958

189. Iravatham Mahadevan on paleographic features states that the language of the *Tolkappium* does not enter the Tamil language until the fifth century A. D. The use of the *Pulli* is described in the *Ehuttatikaram* of the *Tolkappiyam*. Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Tamil Studies Vol. I, Madras, 1971, p-83.

and the land of this culture bore the name of 'Kumari Kandom[190]'. The language of the Sangam literature is so archaic that it has very little resemblance to modern Tamil. The style is more akin to folk literature. The eight Anthologies[191] embody more than 2000 poems ascribed to more than 200 authors. To them must be added The Ten Songs or Idylls *(Pattuppattu)* containing ten larger poems of similar style. There is no agreement among scholars on this. The earliest reference to the Sangam occurs in the Thevarams of Saint Appar, Thirugnana Sambandhar and Thirumangai Alwar.

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190) Gems from Pre-Historic Past, Edited by N Mahalingam, Madras 1981, P-11. The venue of the first Sangam was "Then" (or South) Madurai on the banks of the river 'Pahroli' of the second Kavatapuram and of the third and last modern Madura. The changes in the site were occasioned by tidal waves and deluges which at various times swallowed vast tracts of land in Kumari Kandam but Sri Lanka records in Sinhala language make mention about seven Tamil Sanghams of bygone days. The Thalai Sangham (The first Academy) was held at Then-Madurai (Southern Madurai). This consisted of 549 members which included divine and semi-divine figures like Subramania (Muruga), Agatthiar and Murinjiyoor Mudinagarayar. This learned body, or assembly of competent scholars and pundits, scrutinised nearly 16,149 authors and their works, and affixed its seal of approval to the literary works like 'Perum Paripadal' Mudukuruku', Mudunarai' and 'Kalaraiyavirai' as the crest gems but none of these works have survived. The authoritative grammar of this period is Agathiam written by Sage Agastia who may be described, as the patron saint of Tamil civilization. This first Academy was patronised by a particular dynastic line of 89 pandyan kings.

The Second Academy or Sangham comprised 59 members and the leading figures were Sage Agastia, Tolkappiar and Thuvanakoman (Lord Krishna of Dwaraka). More than 3,700 authors and their works were scrutinised and Agathiam and Tolkappiam were the authoritative works on grammar and etymology. The leading works scrutinised by this academy were 'Mapuranam', Isai Nunukkam' Perumkalithokai and Kuruku. Kavatapuram was the seat of this Academy which was shifted from Then Madurai (South Madurai) by the Pandyan king Vantherseliyan after the subsidence of the South Pandya country. None of the works exist today except Tolkappiam. Again, a further deluge of the sea forced the Pandyan King Mudathirumaran to abandon the city of Kavatapuram and select the new city of Madurai as capital and seat of the Academy.

191) *Nattinai* 400 short poems on love, each of from nine to twelve lines; ***Kuruntogai***, 400 love poems of from 4 to 8 lines each, ***Aingurunuru*** 500 short erotic poems, *Pattuppattu* a small collection of 8 (originally 10) poems, each in ten verses, in praise of the king of the Chera country, ***Kalittogai***, 150 love poems, ***Agananuru*** 400 love lyrics of varying length and Purananuru, 400 poems in praise of kings.

In the *Periyatirumozhi* of Thirumangai Alwar and in the *Tiruppuvai* of Andal and *Divya Prabandham* of the twelve Alwars there are references about the Sangam. However the Sangam works should not be taken as bed—rock of history for they do not have any sequential or chronological or historiographic nexus. But sadly enough, these are the only written sources (literary evidence) to reconstruct the early history of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas. Assessing the importance of Sangam literaure K.A.N. Sastri observes that the most striking feature in the picture is its composite character; "It is the unmistakable result of the blend of two originally distinct cultures best described as Tamilian and Aryan; but it is by no means easy now to distinguish the original elements in their purity"[192]. However the poetic vision of these ancient poets saw India as a unified whole. All lands are ours and all people are our kith and kin was their maxim and this vein pervaded through these immortal idylls and is the core of the culture of Tamilakam. Many rare manuscripts of this extant literature remain to be translated. A thorough study of Sangam literature from historical and critical point of view has yet to be made

This large collection of secular poems which forms the characteristic legacy of the Sangam period is divided into two main groups; 'internal *(Agam)* dealing with love and romance andexternal *(puram)* dealing with the praise of kings. Of the two divisions, *Agam* monopolises the major portion of the Sangam literature. A unique feature of the *Agam* is that the life of the couple is given its settings in time and place *(mudel)* and its natural background *(karu) and then the details of the conduct* of the lover *(uri)* are pictured. Into this structure the whole variety of experiences may be fitted with provision for variations[193].

The country between Venkatam hills and Cape Comorin surrounded by the Arabian sea and Bay of Bengal on the west and east was known as *Tamilakam*. *Tamilakam* was also known as **Centamilnadu** which meant 'the country of chaste Tamil.' According to an Old Venba[194] there were twelve regions in

192. Ibid, p-129.

193. *Kaikkilai* and *Perundinai* are the remaining two aspects of *agam*.

194. See foot-notes 53, 54 and 55 for details.

Tamilakam. All authorities agree that all the kingdoms of the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas formed the land of good Tamil (Centamil) in the early centuries of the Christian era. We have already seen that the age of the Sangam works especially the six earliest anthologies can be reliably dated back to the second and third centuries A.D while the *Kalittokai*, the *Paripadel* and Pattuppattu are a little later.

Non-Aryan Character

They give better details of the daily life of the people of *Tamilakam* of their period unlike other historical narratives in other parts of India revelling in imaginative descriptions of dynasties, their succession tangles and other petty details ignoring the life of the great majority of the population. The Sangam classics were written by poets of the low-castes like Panans and Parraiyas According to Hart, 'It gives a more accurate picture of the social life and customs of the area to which it belongs than does any other classical literature of India"[195]

It gives the social condition of Tamilakam before the Aryans arrived in the South A section of the scholars like K.A. Nilakanta Sastri is of the view that the early Tamil literature is indebted to Sanskrit and that it shows a hybrid society in which Aryans and Non Aryan elements cannot be considered in isolation But the view is unsustainable when examined against the historical background that Tamil had a full blown literature even before Sanskrit entrenched itself in the South and other South Indian languages evolved from Tamil Hart observes 'Words of Sanskrit origin are quite few comprising less than two percent of the *Murukarupatai* and one per cent of the *Pattuppattu* itself later than the earliest works[196] Even though Brahmins were present in South India at the time of the anthologies and that Buddhism and Jainism had been existent there, the influence had not penetrated into the body politic. The customs described in the classics are alien to Aryan India of the time Brahmins were

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195 G. L. Hart, Related Cultural and Literary Elements in Ancient Tamil and Indo-Aryan Harward University 1969 p-2, quoted in Essays on South India. p-42

196 Ibid opp cit p-42

not even priests in temples and religious rites were conducted by the lowest castes like the Parraiyas, the Panas, the Tutiyas and the Velas. The word in Tamil for caste is *Kuti* even though translated as Jathi when the original Tamil word with its own increasing character has nothing to do with *Varna* of the Aryan system. The caste according to the original connotation of the word in Sangam literature denotes sections of the population who had to perform certain functions for the community as a whole. According to archaeologists like Allchins, there was for a long period before the birth of Christ an extremely conservative and homogeneous culture in the Deccan which produced the megaliths found here to-day and that it was this culture that gave birth to Tamil civilisation and the Sangam literature and the *Sattasai* of Hala of Maharashtra's popular poetry. The synthesis of the two literary traditions, Dravidian and Aryan was a later development which is very well gleaned in Kalidasa's works, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. It is said that the Sanskrit dramas owe their form to the dialogue form of the *Kalittokai*.

The pre-Aryan Society of the Sangam Age was a primitive one and its transition into a tribal society was the sequel of Aryan infiltration into this part of India. Unlike in other parts of India caste system was not the basic institution which regulated social development in the Sangam Age. It revealed the characteristics of a purely primeval society producing the bare minimum to satisfy the basic needs of food and shelter. The economic scene portrayed no dismal picture of all-round exploitation of man by man. Neither the caste system nor private property existed in those remote days. The people might have led a community life with some crude form of division of labour. However there are very strong historical grounds to believe that thecastes that are varied and numerous today in Kerala Society were once grouped under one class and one community. Logan is of the view that in the ancient Kerala Society, there was only one community or class who styled themselves as *Cherumans*. In forwarding his theory that the Nayars and Nampoothiris belonged to the same racial stock, E.M.S Nampoothiripad observes: "there are very strong reasons to believe that all the castes that are today considered caste

Hindus were once of the same caste' [197] However this is one of the disputed themes of early Tamil History. K.K. Pillay observes. "The institution of castes was responsible for a remarkable constancy of social customs and habits rather than change"[198] The leading source for this assertion is the oral bardic poetry indirect in its value to the historians Tolkappiyar (Puram-183) speaks of the fourfold division of society. There are still in Kerala visible remanants of a tribal society living under the sheltered abodes of the junglesand plains of Wynad. Attappadyand High Ranges They still cling to their primitive mode of food gathering What ever they produce is for the community itself Their superstitions weld them together to the old way of life They , never take to regular food production. They do not either acknowledge or utilise the productive system of the society around. Even round the Manantoddy town in Wynad, one finds tribal groups still adhering to all these primitive modes of life. They live under the constant suspicion and fear of the police the rich and other exploitive elements of society A recent Malayalam work on tribes maintains that certain of these tribal people are still being sold in the open market like beasts by the rich This bears ample testimony to the importance of chattel slavery in the relations of production and as a supply of labour for production in that remote period of history There are nearly 267 475 tribal people in Kerala divided into about thirty five groups. Some of these groups, like the *Kurichiyas* of Wynad consider themselves as superior by birth and do not allow even high caste Hindus to enter their houses or the temples of their tribal gods Further some of the tribes choose rocky grounds for burial of their dead. Writing in 1967, George wood-cock observes. "A Muduvan told me that his people were buried on a hill-side" among big stones "and that coconuts, betel leaves and flowers were buried with them"[199]. Kerala is perhaps the only place in the world where megalithism is still a living institution. This and other shamnastic practices link them with a pre-Aryan or even a pre-Dravidian culture. They

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197 National Question in Kerala.

198 A Social History of Tamils, p-229.

199 Kerala, A portrait of the Malabar Coast 1967, p-56.

represent the basic village society in the means and relations of production, or, if it is not wrong to call it, "Asiatic Society" of Karl Marx when he said about India[200]. It is not wrong to conclude that during this epoch the people must have lead a community life with some crude form of division of labour. Sardar K.M. Panikkar corroborates this statement when he says that "after twenty centuries of conflict with Hinduism, the Nairs still cling with extreme persistence to spirit-worship". Even to-day State is socially heterodox. Our caste system lacked elements, which were present elsewhere in India-there was hardly any merchant *Vaisyas* or *Kshatriyas* here. But unlike in other parts, it introduced refinements of caste pollution such as the rule by which the beggar Nayadis were not merely untouchables but unseeables. Edgar Thurston interviewing the Nayadis in 1909 has recorded that he heard them say that they carried atmospheric pollution and therefore took a circuitous route to reach Shornur by walking a **longer distance** instead of crossing over the long bridge which spans the Ponnani river. The Vellalas and the Nayars of Malabar never **accepted**the four fold division and, while technically described as Sudras by the Brahmins, enjoyed, as communities, social power similar to that claimed by the mythical Kshatriyas of the North. The matrilineal joint family system, even now having force of law is another substantial deviation from the strict tenets of Hindu society.

Post-Dravidian Society

True that it was the interaction of twin currents of cultural influence, one the land-borne and the other sea-borne, that reshaped the communal society of Kerala. The land-borne cultural transformation evidently points to the Aryanisation and the sea-borne to the change brought about by Europeanisation.

The traditional Parasurama account contends that the Aryanisation was peaceful penetration. This is by no means historically accurate. Having seen that the archaeological discoveries give some inkling into the type of people who occupied

200. It may be recalled here that Marx's interest in India arose from the fact that he considered it as a classic example of a country which retained relations peculiar to primitive communal society.

Kerala in pre-historic times, it is certain that the Aryanisation was by all means a process of military conquest. The hypothesis of George Woodcock in this connection is "what happened among the Dravidians was the acceptance by a militarily powerful ruling class of a more highly developed and dynamic culture". This facile assertion is basically wrong. Primitive peoples are known for their obstinacy to uphold their own culture as supreme and their hesitation to surrender themselves to strangers who had nothing in common with them. Evidently the Aryans had to fight with weapons sharper than the Vedas There is also a very line of reasoning that the Nampoothiri Brahmins were the first immigrants to follow this conquest. This matter too is a subject of controversy. E. M. S. Nampoothiripad in his book The National Question in Kerala observed that both Nayars and Nampoothiris belonged to the original inhabitants of Kerala and became divided as a result of the establishment of a caste system based on land holdings. The available evidence shows that all the Nampoothiris may not be Aryan immigrants but those among the early inhabitants who gained supremacy over their brethren by exercising decisive influence by adapting themselves to the changed environment Necessity might have been utilised by them to emerge as the outstanding among the natives by expropriating vast areas of land and other resources into their hands The dominant class which controlled the means of production came to the forefront with the establishment of Aryan supremacy The dominant features that underlie the Aryanisation are the emergence of private property in land, the caste system and the Aryan culture.

Religion

The poems give an insight into the religion of the early Tamils. It was pre-eminently an animistic one. Divine forces were conceived as indwelling in actual physical objects. They were called Annanku However early Tamil literature is completely devoid of mythology which perforce pin-points to the non-Aryan element in the early social strata of the Sangam period. Ancestor-worship of a limited type seems to have flourished from early times, as is seen from the practice of erecting memorial stones (*Nadukal*) and hero stones (*Veerakal*).

These stones found in large numbers all over the ancient Tamilakam were installed on the grave yards of fallen heroes. The *Tolkappium* speaks of six successive stages in the erection of hero stones. These hero stones sanctified as deities and continued to be worshipped for quite a long time after the Sangam Age. *Purananuru* (232, 264, 260 etc. etc.) *Pattupattu (89) Puraporul Venba Malai* etc. contain prolific descriptions about the erection of hero stones.[201]. This formed a part of the animism which had developed from the early decades of the Sangam Age. Animism implies the cult of spirits which are imagined to exist in the form of demons, ghosts and souls invisible to the human-eye In several Sangam works the word *Pey* denoting ghosts is found. The *Bhutas*, **Pretas, Pisachus,** *Yakshini*, *Gandharva* are all found to live in trees. From *Purananuru* we know that the people of the Sangam Age had a conception of heaven and hell. In several works there is reference about the performance of penance (*Tavam*) to attain the heaven. Tirujnana Sambandar speaks in his *Tevaram* about *Chudalaimadan* believed to have control over venomous snake.: *Ankalamman* is believed to be the counterpart of the *chudalaimadan*. It is pertinent in this connection to remember that a shrine of *Chudalaimadan* is installed near the main entrance in several Siva temples of later time. *Ankalamman* assumed one of the several forms of *Kottavai* or *Kali* of later days. *Tolkappium* mentions of a *velan* dance. A goat was killed, then its brain mixed with its blood and toddy were offered to *Muruga*. A *Kurava* then in ecstasy danced as *Muruga* and other *Kuravas* joined the dance. In the ecstastic dance, the central figure of the dance was believed to be the God of *Muruga* and whatever he uttered in that ecstasy was accepted as the truth. The *Velan* was the priest as well as the medicine man of the community. Even now there is a deep-rooted belief by women folk in Kerala that *velan* can drive away evil spirit by his chanting. The jack and the vengai were the pre-dominant trees worshipped. The *kodichis* or *kurava* women were skilled at the *Kurava* dance. The Kurava girl figures as *Valli*, Muruga's wife. The favourite way of worship of *Kottavai* was to dance the *Vettuva Vari*. In the Ranni hills and their neighbourhood the *Vettuvas* called as *cheruvedas* follow even

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201. In Silapathikaram also there is reference to *Nadukalkadai*

to this day the patrilineal system of inheritance of the Sangam times.

It is probable that these primitive deities got merged with the Hindu Pantheon in later times. Many rites and rituals prevalent among the pre-Dravidian inhabitants still figure in the annual festivals of many temples in Kerala. In the Sree Padmanabha Swamy temple at Trivandrum the great annual festival commences with the lighting of fire brought by a *Malayan* or an aborginal dweller of the hills. Similarly in the Tirunavai temple festival the garland brought by a cherumi was considered more sacred than the garlands brought by kings and chieftains.[202]

As was common among early civilisations naturism or the worship of cosmic forces like wind, rivers, stars, sky etc, was also practised during the early years of the Sangam epoch. Anthropologists are divided as to whether animism or naturism was earlier in origin. The tree worship practised during the Sangam times forms an integral element of the modern integrated Hinduism. Monier Williams in his *Religious Thought and Life in India* observes "the adoration of trees shrubs and plants, in virtue of the supernatural quality of divine essence supposed to be inherent in them is almost universally difused over the globe as the worship of animals".[203] Of particular importance was the banyan tree (*Arayal*). Other trees like *vembu, kadambu, vilvavam, konnai* were held sacred. Snake pits found in and around the trees were also worshipped. The totemic symbols the carp of the Pandyas, the tiger of the Cholas and the bow of the Cheras were adopted with the object of overpowering evil spirits. The totemic symbols are spoken of as *Pori* in Sangam literature. Nachchinarkkiniyar speaks of seven symbols adopted by the early Tamil rulers. They were called *Ezhu pori*. Anklets worn by young maiden with engravings appear to have been a legacy of these totemic symbols. Moreover the palaces of kings and houses of the common people had totemic engravings of animals and plants upon the posts on either side of the door way. Totemic symbols also figured on the flags of kings. Unlike in other parts of the world, totemism in Tamilakam was

202 C Achutha Menon Kali worship in Kerala (Malayalam) 1943

203 Page 326

neither a cult of the dead nor based on the doctrine of transmigration. It was certainly a product of animism. What happened was that animism first led to totemism and in course of time to the worship of personified God. Initially naturism necessitated houses to accomodate the idols, the evolution of complicated rituals and sacrifices and culminating in course of time to the erection of temples. The temples were known as *Koyil*, *Nagar*, *Kottam* etc. The phallic worship of Siva was also in vogue in the Sangam though we cannot determine with certainty when it began and whether it evolved from the form of sex worship. Some historians are of the view that the inhabitants of the Tamil country copied the practice as the descendentsof the Indus people or the pre-Aryan Dravidians of the Indian continent. The *linga* at Gudimallam probably of the 2nd century B.C. on iconographic grounds is cited in support of this contention.[204]. Bruce Foote discovered the representation of a *Linga* and a couchant bull from the rock bruisings in the Kalpagallu hill in the Bellary district.[205] The cult of the bull is closely associated with Siva. However a sizeable majority of Indian writers question the identification of Siva with phallic worship. According to them the Sivalinga represents the *formless* or Almighty denoting a state of renunciation. The *linga* was represented in the Sangam Age in the form of a stump of wood known as *Kandu*. The *Pattinappalai* states that the place where Kandu was stationed in the Podiyil hill of the Ays was a common place of the village which was kept clean by proper sweeping and that the *Kandu* itself was decorated and worshipped. Nachchinarkkiniyar interprets *kandali* occuring in *Tolkappiyam* as denoting a state of detachment or renunciation requiring no need for worshipping *Kandu*. He describes the *Kandu* as *Deivam Uraiyum Tori* meaning the stump in which God resides. *Aalamar, Chelvan, Mukkan Chelvan, Mudu, Muddalvan*, etc. occurring in *Purananuru, Akananuru* etc. were all takento *represent* the Siva icon which leads to the conclusion that the representation of Siva as *linga* and icon was prevalent during the Sangam Age.

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204. T. A. Gopinatha Rao: Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 88–9

205. Bruce Foote ascribed it to the Neolithic phase. Neolithic man worshipped the phallus.

Each physiographic region attached a special importance to a particular deity. The Seyon (Murugan) was the deity of the Kurinchi, *Mayon* (Vishnu) of Mullai, *Vendan* (Indra) of Marudam and *Varuna* (Sun) of *Neythal*[206]. *The Goddess of* Palai was Kottavai. *Kadavul* occurring in *Tolkappiyum* and other works is interpreted to mean a vague conception of Almighty as a byproduct of animism *Kadavul* also denotes on other occasions particular gods. However the more important deities of the Sangam Age were *Siva*,[207], *Valiyon* (Balarama), *Mayon* (Vishnu) and *Seyon* (Murugan). *Siva* was by far the most outstanding deity during the Sangam Age. There is no doubt that he had become an Aryanised deity in later times. His favourite consort Parvathi was known as Kanamar, *Cholvi, Kottavi, Malaimagal* and *Palayol*. His dances were called *kodukotti, Pandarangam, Kapazhi.*

Besides the four important deities *Brahma (Mudiyavan, Mamudu Mudalvan)* meaning creator of the universe, *Kaman*[208] *(Kamavel,* God of love) *Rati (Kama's* consort), *Yaman (Kalan* or *Kaladevan*, referred as *Kuttu* or *Kuttattudan) Kottavai* (Goddess of desert, Palai), *Lakshmi (Ilakkumi, Tirumagal*, Goddess of wealth) Saraswathi (Kalaimagal or Kalai Vani, Chinta Devi etc. goddess of learning) Sun and Moon *(Katir Chelvan* god of prosperity)

Temples housing deities seem to have appeared in the early Sangam age and they were known as *Kottam* or *Koil*. But very stray references are there in *Purananuru. Pattupattu* and *Kalithokai* about temples It is not however possible to have an exact idea of the structure of the temples of this period. In *Nedunalvadai* occurs Karuvodu Pevariya, Kanbu, etc. which is interpreted by some scholars as referring to *Garbhagriha* or the

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206 Varuna occurs only in Tolkappiyam and should not be confused with the Aryan Varuna

207 The name Siva as such does not occur in any of the Sangam works. Silappadikaram used the name for the first time The Jains also used this name to denote their deity *Alamar Chelvan Mudu Mudalvan, Adiryan (Adirai* was the star sacred) etc are the epithets used in the early Sangam works

208 *Remember Kamvel kottam* (Temple of Kama) in Kaverippompatinam.

inner *sanctum sanctorum*. So it may not be wrong to assume that the nucleus of the Hindu temple have arisen in the Sangam age itself. In *Kalithokai* there is reference about *Puppali* or *offering of flowers*. *Purananuru* refers to the worship of herostones *(Virakkal)* with peacock feathers. The normal offerings to the deities during the time of worship were food and toddy. In *Pattupattu* there is reference to offerings of rice balls, sprinkled with the blood of sacrificed animals to the goddess of the Ayirai mountain. The *Kottavai* of Ayirai Malai was the goddess of the Cheras. Whenever the early Chera kings set out for battle they used to propitiate this Goddess with sacrificial rice and with *Mantras*, to the accompaniment of Murasu or War drum by way of *pooja* In *Akananuru* a reference is there to *Pavai* adorned with strings of pearls which according to scholars, refer to images of deities kept by people in their houses.

A close scrutiny of *Tolkkapium* and other Sangam works would reveal that 80 per cent of the population had no religion till A.D. 500.[209] They largely followed the Dravidian forms of worship. But it cannot be said that Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism did not exist side by side and each of these religions had their own followers among the people of the land. The people did not hesitate to worship Padmavathy Devi of the Jains or to accept, the *prasadam* or sacred offerings of the Brahmins of the temple or to perform *Yagas*. In *Pattupattu* it is laid down that the smoke from the sacrificial fire was no different to

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209 Tamil India, p-64. "Caivism is the old pre-historic religion of South India; essentially existing from pre-Aryan times and holds sway over the Tamil people But this great attempt to solve the problems of God, soul, humanity, nature, evil, suffering, and the unseen world, has never been fully expounded in English Its textbooks (probably its sources) exist in Tamil only, and in high Tamil verse, which is often made, of set purpose, obscure and difficult.....
It had peculiar forms of sacrifice, ecstatic religious dances, rites of demon worship, and other ceremonies which still exist among the villagers of the extreme South, and more or less among the rural population everywhere.. ...
In process of time Buddhism and the Jain system found their way into the South, propagated by zealous and able men, and thus undoubtedly a softer and more genial character was imparted to the whole of South India. The great revival and spread, however, of Caivism is due to certain saints or devotees, who were men of great devotion, unwearied activity, and remarkable power. (Samaya Kuravar and Santhana Kuravar)" - (Dr G U. Pope)

them from the smoke of the hearth where meat was being cooked. The Chola monarchs like Vetta Perunarkilli and the Chera monarch like Palayani Chelkelu Kuttuvan performed *vagas* and *velvis* (vedic sacrifices). But it would be wrong to infer that *Varnasrama* on the basis of Aryan religious convictions and customs was established at this remote period. A close scrutiny of *Tolkappium* and *Pattunattu* will reveal that there is a deliberate attempt made by the composers of these works to spread the *Varnasrama* of the Aryans. The role of Aryan culture has been over-estimated by most scholars, as revealed from the study of anthropologists. All classes of South Indian Brahmins follow mostly Dravidian customs. Some of the original Gods in the temples have been replaced by idols with Sanskrit names. And that many rites performed in temples are imported from the North but they have been radically altered to fit Dravidian norms. An intensive study of ancient Tamil literature will reveal an entirely new stream in Indian Culture which will dispel many of the mysteries which have plagued indologists while they have relied only on Aryan sources.[210]

Kingship

The achievement of kings are described in *Puram*[211] or exterior poems in Sangam literature. The country was divided between small kings called *Kurunilamannar* most of whom controlled local areas. Tamilakam had three chief kings the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya. But the absolute authority of these kings extended only within a small area around the capital and the land adjoining it. Their power chiefly lay with the allegiance of *Kurunilamannar*. In times of dearth, these monarchs demanded tribute from the small chieftains.[212] This is clearly testified by the descriptions in the classics. In Puram 51 the poet says of the Pandyan monarch "If you oppose

210 Essays on South India op. cit. p-60

211 It is claimed that the classical poetry of early Tamils about heroism comprise about one quarter of all extant poems. Kailasapathy in Tamil Heroic Poetry (Oxford 1968) says that of the 400 songs, 138 praise 43 kings of three dynasties, 141 praise 48 chiefs and 121 have unidentifiable heroes.

212 p-28 Studies in Kerala History opp. cit.

and defeat another king and demand tribute, kings who give saying "Take one without trembling. But pitiful, pitiful are those who lose your mercy. Like the white insects flying from red mounds laboriously made by tiny termites living for one day is confusion for them". It is clear that this represents the traditions of personal loyalty found in European feudalism. The power of the greater kings lay in their enlistment of warriors of the nuclear areas whose rulers were in vassalage to them. In *Purananuru 13*, the poet addressing his patron tells him to give at once, for he might have to die at any time for his king. It was the custom at the time of the anthologies to write the deeds of a hero on the memorial stone erected to him. Tamil chiefs and kings celebrated in *Puram* poems were heroes in war. They are described as sacred extensions of the tribal societies they ruled by virtue of their military prowess and several poems refer to blood internecine fighting among kinsmen for the prize of chieftainship[213]. However the poems throw ample light into the rudimentary conception of kingship in that remote period of history. In the Sangam poems the three kings of the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya are referred to by epithets *Mu Ventar*" (Three kings), *Mutiyutai Mu Ventar* (the three crowned kings). The king was called *ko* or *kon* or *kadum ko* (Great ruler) Seldom was used the personal names to denote the king. Each of the kings were identified by floral emblems, *atti* or ebony of the Cholas, the margosa *(Veppu)* of the Pandyas and the Palmyra palm *(Pana)* of the Cheras. According to modern researchers these emblems represented the clan tutelary trees or *Kavalmarams*. Animal emblems were also used, the tiger for the Cholas, the bow for the Cheras and the carp for the Pandyas The *Venkottakudai* (the white umbrella), the *Kol* (the sceptre) and the *Murasu* (the drum) were used by these kings. The modern researchers call this as heroic kingship as opposed to the old concept that with the consolidation of the three Tamil kingdoms – the divine royalty blossomed into a full-fledged political theory. The ruler was a great warrior hero who protected his warrior ancestry. The rulers were generous. There is no mention of booty in the poems. Wars were fought to attain fame *(Pukal)* and paradise *(mannatu)* – It follows that the conception of kingship was ethical also far from being worldly. It was a sor

213 P-4, All the Kings' Mana Burt on Stein, Madras 1984

of tribal kingship. Louis Dumont remarks "Kingly authority derived from a connection in blood of a king to the people and their land of which he was substantially a part indeed, an extension The king was responsible for nourishing and protecting both Expansion of his authority was in the cognate medium of kinship, that is by marriage alliance"[214].

The threegreat virtuesof royalty were heroism, justice and charity and the war-drum *(Vira-Murasu)*, the Justice-drum *(Neethi-Murasu)* and the gift-drum *(Kodai-Murasu)* were sounded indicative of the occasions. The Sangam works contain the story of the Chola King who punished his heir apparent with death by driving a car on him, to atone for the slaughter a calf which was crushed under the prince's car In *Purananuru* Killi Valavan the young king was offered good counsel by Arasil Kizhar in these terms

"Let me speak out to this rich country's King .
Be easy of access at fitting time, as though
The lord of Justice sat to hear, and right decree.
Such kings have rain on their dominions at their will !
.. . .Let all thy victories
Be the toiling ploughman's gain...... ....
Reject the wily counsels of malicious men.
Lighten the load of those who till the soil.
The dwellers in the land protect If thou do this,
Thy stubborn foes shall lowly bend beneath thy feet".

Justice was administered by the King through popular assemblies A number of *Taras* made a Nadu, a Kuttam and a number of Kuttams, a Mandalam under a Viceroy, Scion, or Prince of the blood. The King was at the top of the ladder of authority. His functions were executive and judicial and he consulted the popular assemblies in every matter of importance. The King had no power to make laws According to *Adiyarku Nallar* there were priests, commanders ministers, ambassadors and spies *(Thuthuvar* and *Otrar)* The *Ennaravam* (eight councils) comprised executive officers *(Karumath-Ivalavar)*, priests *(karuma-vithikal)*, treasury officers *(Kanaka-sutras)*, palace guards *(Kadi-*

214 Quoted by Burton Stein op. cit. p-45

kappalar), chief citizens (*Nagara-manthar*), captains (*Padai-thalaivar*), elephant-warriors (*Ynai-virar*), and cavalry officers (*Ivuli-maravar*). The qualifications of the councillors were noble birth, erudition, good character, sincerity, purity, equanimity, absence of envy and avarice. The Kingship was hereditary. But succession in disputed cases was decided by the assemblies. The queen was respectfully called *Perumtevi*. The widowed queens often committed *Sati*. Polygamy was prevalent among the kings. There is reference about the *Sati* committed by the wives of Ay Antiran. The *Masatikallu* or *Pulachikkallu*, even now found in some parts of Trivandrum District was said to have been erected over such burial grounds.

Social structure

The poems give an insight into the political organisation of the times. This aspect is more important than the dynastic history. The early Sangam classics vividly portray the agricultural pattern of the period. The land was broadly divided into *menpulam* (paddy land) and *Vanpulam* (mountain territory) where such dryland crops as millet, could be grown. *Tinai*[215] in its most usual sense denoted the five fold physiographical classification of land. Certainly the word referred to as *Tinai* stands for a total web of life in a distinct geographical region. The five well marked physiographic regions were the Kurinchi, the hill country or mountainous region, the *Palai*[216] or dreary waste, the *Mullai* or the forests, the *Marutham* or riverine including the fertile low lying plains, and the *Neythal* or the coastal belt. The above five-fold regions had their distinct occupation, flora fauna, music and arts.

Hunting was the principal occupation of the people of the Kurinchi[217]. The inhabitants of this region were *Kuravas*

215 Apart from this meaning, the word denotes the particular modes of behaviour, social or moral, of the people of each physiographical region. Thirdly it refers to the reflections of the geographical and social characteristics on literature.

216. Some hold that Palai is a later addition to the original four-fold division of the land.

217 The name Kurinchi owes to the Kurunchi flower commonly found in the hilly area.

Perumpanattupadai depicts the plethora of many weapons of warfare like spears, shields, bars and arrows in the caves and caverns of the *Kuravas*. Viewed in a modernistic context, the region represented a primitive mode of living. Neolithic men probably would have dwelled in this tract. It appears that there was a settled form of domestic life as the institution of marriage in the *Kurinchi* was the fulfilment of *Kalavu* or premarital love. The lover presented his lady love with triumphs of the hunt like the teeth of the tiger, and she adorned it proudly round her neck. Some scholars trace this custom to the tying of the tali, the symbol of marriage in South India. In *Kurinchi* land millets and peas were cultivated. The Jack and Vengai were the predominant trees. The *Kuravas* were adept at extracting honey with the aid of ladders of bamboo poles from the tall trees on steep mountains. Wild bears and elephants abounded there.

The *Palai* or sandy region occupied a peculiar position. In this region there was no settled life. The inhabitants of *Palai* territory were known as *Marvas*, *Vettuvas* or *Eyinas*. The *Eyinas* and the Vettuvas belong to the *Veda* Tribe. Even today they follow the patrilineal system in the Idukki area of Kerala. The *Vettuvas* of Kerala are called *Cheruvedas*. The Eyinas were proficient in archery and they were recruited in large numbers by the chieftains of the time. The word *Vanavan Maravan* had been used in the Sangam works to signify the Chera commander-in-chief. But from the casual references in the *Perumpanattuppadai* we note that the main calling of the *Maravas* was highway robbery or *Aralaittal*. This predatory activity hindered commercial life. Some of the occupied exalted positions under the Cheras and the Pandyas. The *Mullai* represented the distinct pastoral region of the Sangam times. The name itself originated from the fragrant jasmine flower. The people were engaged mainly in cattle rearing and exploitation of forest wealth. The *Idaiyas* or the shepherds were the main occupants of the region. Favourable environment facilitated the domestication of animals in a large measure. The *Idaiyas* were also known as *Ayar*. The women of the *Ay* community was known as *Ay Magal*. Cows and buffalows were also maintained by these shepherd class. Marketing of milk and milk products were a feature of their

daily life. Dairy products formed an important constitutent of their diet. Rice was their staple food. In some parts of the *Mullai* region there was cultivation of paddy and maize. Ploughing was familiar. This region represented the true pastoral economy. It is claimed by some authors that the rise of joint family system among the Tamils can be traced to this pastoral economy of the *Mullai* region. Some historians are of the view that the crude form of Kingship tooks its origin among the *Idaiyas*. A considerable section of the Kings and chiefs of ancient Kerala were originally *Ays* or *Idaiyas*. *Kalithokai* says that the custom of bull fighting was common among the *Ay* Kings. In the Marutham territory cultivation might have begun at a very early stage of history. Paddy, sugarcane, mango plantain, jack and other fruit trees were cultivated. The land was fertile even though the diversion of water through canals for purposes of irrigation might have been prevalent during that period. The names of certain classes of people like the *Vellalar* (the rulers of water) and *Karaler* (the ruler of clouds) occur in the Sangam classics which clearly shows that considerable progress had been made in the art of cultivation. In *Perumpanattuppadai* the various process of agriculture carried on in the *Marutham* region are graphically pictured. The inhabitants of the *Marutham* region were known as *Uzhavar* or the *Vellalar*. Their overlord was called *Uran* or Makizhnan. Some records of the tenth and eleventh centuries of Kerala mention *Urans* as members of village assemblies. Rain and cultivation had been associated with *Indra* or *Vendan*. There is mention of the *Vendan* festival lasting for twenty eight days. This festival started with *Kuravaikoothu* and is mentioned in the Chinnamanur plates as having been conducted by Nedumchezhian Pandya to ward off the evils of famine.[218] In *Purananuru*, there are references to the *Pilavu* prepared with rice and meat and rice cooked[219] with milk, ghee and gram. In *Perumpanattuppadai*, it is stated that the ploughmens' arms were hard and black like iron acting sedulously to bring forth

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218. Depiction of this colourful festival is found in later works like *Silappatikaram* and *Manimekalai*.

219. Megasthenes makes mention of *Oryzahepta* or cooked rice and a wine made from rice as an Indian beverage.

gold from the land. The liquor brewed from rice, the toddy from the palmyrah trees imbibed with mango, the roasted shrimp, the gentry eating cooked rice from silver plates, the rice and gram and the *pilavu* cooked especially for the marriage occasions are all described in *Purananuru* and *Akananuru*. Besides paddy, sugarcane and fruit cultivation, cotton was also raised over a considerable tract of the *Marutham* region. Sugarcane juice was a popular beverage among the people of the region. Some people of the Marutham region took to fishing also. The *kayal* fish and prawns were dried and eaten along with rice. The Marutham region was studded with houses of the ploughmen. Their groves contained jack trees, palmyrah and areca palms as well as plantain trees with bunches of fruits. A vivid description of the dwelling houses is provided in *Perumpanattuppadai*. The flooring of the house was smeared with cowdung. The grains and other commodities were bartered by the residents for salt and sea fish, milk and milk products. Cart was the chief means of transport.

In the *Neythal* region, the natural occupation was fishing. The fisherfolk of the region was known by different names as *Minavar, Paradavar, Parathavas, Valainars, Nulaiyar, Pazhaiyas, Turaivans*. In the *Vikkirama Chozha Ula*, the Chola King is described as "the Thuraivar of Kumari" by Ottakkoothan. The *Parathavas* were also called *Paravas* and their headmen were known as *Thuraivar, Pulamban*[220] *(Cherpan, Konkan* etc.) In *Perumpanattuppadai* and *Pattinappalai* granaries and stores in the *Parathavar* streets are depicted. The *Parathavas* setting out for fishing at the auspicious hour of the morning, fishing at night with torches, the injuries sustained by them from the sharks, their food with fish curry, the offering of *Pazhaiya* women to the sea-god on full moon days, the *Parathava* pearldivers, the *Parathava* women delighting in drinking the tender palmyrah fruit juice, the fun and frolic of their children in the sea, the exchange of salt and fish for paddy, the houses of rich merchants, the jewels of gold embellished with gems worn by *Parathava* women etc. are among the themes of poetic fancy in *Akananuru*. Akam 140 says thus, When the carts, loaded with white salt

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220) Punamban is the word now used in Kerala (See p-628, Gundert Nighandu, Kottayam 1962

from the unploughed fields, labour up ascend the hill, the salt trader, with his angry stick, urges the bullock on and shouts the price of the salt; his beloved young daughter who carries white salt on her head, jingling her small bracelets and waving her hand, shouts from street to street, rock-salt for paddy, measure for measure, but is frightened by the house dog, that, recognising a stranger's voice, leaps barking towards her." It appears that in the *Neythal* region, there had been a great measure of urbanisation than in the other regions.

A peep into the lives of the people of the five regions noticed above, leads us to trace the history of the community life of the tribal society with a certain amount of urbanisation. People lived as close social groups in the different *Tinais*. Each social group had a headman called *Verpan* or *Vidalai* or *Talavan*. It may be recalled that the *Akam* poems deal with heroes *(Talaivan)* and heroines *(Talaivi)*. The distinctive produce of each of the five regions was properly utilised. This particular socio-economic phenomenon has led some historians to arrive at certain interesting and often bewildering postulates. P T. Sreenivasa Iyengar contends that the Tamils were indigenous to the land where they have flourished through the ages and that the evolution through which the Tamilians or their ancestors passed from the Paleolithic to the Iron age occurred originally in Tamilakam and that it diffused to other parts of the world later.[221] The contention of Iyengar that the artefacts and other relics of ancient times discovered in old Tamilakam form an unbroken series showing that there has been a steady evolution of culture from the lowest paleolithic stage to the latest age of metals is untenable in the light of the recent discoveries at Brahmagiri explicitly throwing light on different epochs in succession. Further it is by no means plausible to hold that during the Palaeolithic and neolithic ages, the Tamil language had developed. The assumption runs contrary to accepted facts of archaeology, ethnology and linguistics. The bedrock of archaeology proves beyond doubt that the transition from paleolithic to neolithic took place independently.

However we do not see much of Aryan influence in Tamilakam

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221 History of Tamils, 1921, p.1

during the early Sangam period, even though Aryan beliefs seem to have reached a few high in the social scale. The fusion of the Dravidian and Aryan culture did begin in the early centuries of the Christian era but it became strongly wedded only by the end of the fifth century. The names of jewellery, implement of agriculture, weights and measures, weapons of war, musical instruments, cereals, dishes and vessels occuring in the Sangam classics amply justify the existence of an advanced civilization. The methods of cultivation in vogue in that remote period of history is even to-day practised in Kerala and Tamilnad.

Other occupations

Apart from agriculture and pastoral pursuits, other important occupations included weaving, carpentry, pottery and other skilled arts. Under the miscellaneous professions came hair-cutting *(Kundal Kovdu)*, Laundering*(Kaliyar* of *Akananuru)* funeral service *(Pulaith of Purananuru)*, drummers *(Tudivan. Panan* etc.), toddy tappers *(Kal* and *Toupi* of *Akam* and *Puram)* hunters *(Vedar, Vettuvar, Evinar* etc·) fishing *(Paradavar)* women courtesans who lived by harlotry *(Parattaivar)* priests *(Velans* who served as priests of Murugan, Choliya with front tuft) etc.

Educational System

F. E. Keay in his A History of Education in India and Pakistan observes. "There was in ancient times in South India a system of education connected with Tamil Culture as distinguished from the Aryan Culture which came from North India..... But what forms such educational system had, how widespread they were and what classes they influenced has not yet been ascertained." Kerala as an integral part of the socio-cultural unit called Tamilakam formed part of this educational system of ancient Tamils its philosophy, aims, ideals, agencies, curriculam teachers, students and merits. Learned scholars like S. K. Chatterjee and R. K. Mukerjee have pointed out how the ancient culture of Tamils contributed a great many element of permanent importance of Hindu civilization in religious, ideological, linguistic and national spheres. Literature as the autobiography of mankind is reflected in the works of Sangam period. We have already referred to the three Sangams which

existed till 400 A. D. All the earlier works of the first and second Sangams are believed to have been lost by fire, floods and ravages of time. According to Bishop Caldwell,[222] "Whatever antiquity may be attributed to *Tholkappium*, it might have been preceded by many centuries of literary culture. The reference of the author of *Tholkappium* to previous works is clear when he says "Scholars before me have said so." Scholars and poets commanded the respect of the Kings, chieftains and all leading persons in society. Many chieftains vied with each other to honour the learned poets and induced them to adorn their courts. We find that they confided in the learned scholars and sought their advice and service in matters of administration. In Purananuru ([183])the great Pandya King Nedumchzhian says that he would invite educated men to become his advisors. The awareness of the importance of education had gained supreme popularity, A stanza in*Puram*(312) states that it is duty of the father to educate his son so that he will become virtuous. That education was not a privilege confined to any group is proved by the fact that the Sangam poets were drawn from all walks of life of ancient Tamilakam and from all tribes. According to an estimate among the 192 Sangam poets, there were 13 Kings, 29 Brahmins, 57 Vellalas, 36 women, 17 hillmen, 13 foresters, 7 Vanigars, 7 artisans, 1 shepherd, 1 potter etc. In short education was open to all tribes. Education was considered a life long process. It was poetically stated by a poet "just as water springs more and more in the well as water is drawn out, knowledge develops more only when it is used and spread to other people". The broad divisions of knowledge were *Enn* (numbers) and *Eluthu* (letters). In the early ages, Tamil was the medium of education. Tholkappiar mentions of vedic studies. But this must have been confined to Jains, Buddhists and Brahmins from the North by the Pallava period in 6th century A. D. Tholkkappiar refers to three broad divisions of Tamil study viz. *Ival, Isai* and *Natakam*: Prose, poetry and drama. The knowledge received through the oral tradition was considered superior to learning from books. Verbal instruction as the method of teaching played the most significant role and memory training was given more scope. Writing was on Palmyra leaves

222. A comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages, p 113 14

with the help of pointed iron stylus. The script is believed to be at first *Brahmi* and later *Vattezhuthu*. Poet Avvaiar's advice to the young is. 'learn while young; letter and number claim esteem; avoid ignorance, covet to be versed in knowledge; *learn all sciences and cease not to learn*". *In Jivaka Chintamani, a Jain work of the 9th century, we come across a reference that education started at the age of 5* The pial schools were known as *Tinnai Palli* conducted by *Kanakkavar* In *Puram* we find that the Pandyan King Nedumchezhian paid the **Kanakkavar** some fees for his services. In pial school a good grounding in numerical notations was imported. Apart from *Kanakkayar Asan, Asiriyar Kulapathi, Ilampalasiriyar* etc. are the appellations used in early Sangam works to refer to teachers. *Karai Asans* are prolifically referred to in many works. Besides the general education the young men were trained in the arts of war. *Puram* refers to the *Poravai* or the military training centres established all over the kingdom where all young men were given training in wrestling and use of all weapons like *vill, vel, val* (bow and arrow, spear and sword). There used to be *Porvizha*[223] or military tournaments every year, when young men demonstrated their skill in military arts. The poetess *Nakkannaivar* refers to one of the tournaments she witnessed in *Puram* songs We come across *Asiriyan* or *Acharya* who trained the princes in general and professional education. In the field of aesthetic education also, the Sangam age had attained a high level of development Reference to *Esai* and *Natakam* (Music dance and drama) in *Pattupattu* and *Ettuthokai* are numerous. The *Pana* were the roving poets of talent who used to compose and sing in praise of their patrons, the *Porunar* accompanying kings to battlefields to cheer up the kings and soldiers by their music and recitations, the *Viraliar* or woman dancers who used to accompany the Pana are also referred to in *Pattupattu* and other Sangam works. The reference to *Pallivam* or a collection of musical instruments like *Malavu, Mattalam, Kuzhal* etc. in *Purananuru* show the development of indigeneous style of music long before Aryan influence. About 108 different patterns of musical insturments are mentioned. There is prolific mention

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223 The place name Poruvazhu (Adoor Taluk of Pathanamthitta District) might have been derived in this way. There are many other place names such as Porkalam, Porakkad etc in Kerala

of folk-music in the epics: *Erraoattu* (a song of the farmers-while irrigating their lands) *Nadukaipattu* (song during transplantation) *Erkalapattu* (song during harvest), *Kurathipattu (*The song of the Kurinchi women), *Ammanainattu* or Thalattu (Lullubi), *Padanipattu* (Martial songs sung by soldiers) are some among them. A poet of *Purananuru* tells us how a girl was able to tame wild beasts from her land by her sweet music and drive away the birds by her songs.[224] *Tolkappium* mentions various types of dancing such as *Kuthu* and *Attams Vallikuthu* in honour of *Valli* the consort of Lord *Muruga*. *Velayadal* in praise of *Muruga*. *Kuravaikuthu* in honour of Lord *Krishna* by Ayar girls, are among them. 33 patterns of hand pose and a variety of expressions were needed in the *Kodukotti* or the Siva dance. *Madurai Kanchi* refers to the permanent stage built in palaces for the enactment of drama. From the commentaries of *Tholkappium* we find that the artists were systematically trained to represent the nine emotions — *heroism, fear, contempt, surprise, love, anger, sorrow, mirth* and *self-possession* A characteristic feature of the performance of these fine arts was that they were mostly secular in character and rendered in public places. All evidence found both in the inscriptions and the literary works of the period show that these art forms reached a high water mark and received patronage from all ranks of peoples in society. It was the increasing infiltration of the Jains, Buddhists and the Aryans from North India that transformed the nature of these art forms into religious. The *Matas*, the *Pallis* and the *Viharas* arose to popularise the philosophy and dharma of these religions and the functions of these arts were closely brought into contact with the religious functions in the respective institutions and treated as a means of proselytisation. All inscriptional references after the 4th century A.D. refer to the practice of these arts in temples on occasions of religious importance. Many sangam poems are attributed to women scholars. We hear of as many as 37 women scholars in the early epics. *Avvaiyar* who had intimate connection with the Chera country was one among them. She belonged to the Pana tribe like *Paranar* and *Kapilar*, the great

224. Educational system of the Ancient Tamils. Jaya Kothai Pillai. Madras. 1972. p. 41.

Sangam poets from Kerala. The *Purananuru* mentions about 15 poetesses by name, most of them belonging to caste now considered inferior. With the spread of Aryan ideology women as well as the low castes gradually lost their high status in society and right to education. Temples became the centres of *all cultural activities and naturally educational institutions formed* part of temple establishments and education of women and low caste in these institutions was opposed to the principle of *Chathurvarnya*.

It is seen from certain poems in *Purananuru* collection that the early Tamils had acquired substantial knowledge of astrology. *Kani* occurring in *Akananuru* (151 : 15 also Nattinai 226, 373 and Tinaimozhi Aimpadu 8 : 3) meant astrology and astrologer. The word *Kanivan* or *Kanivar* (Puram 192 and 194) also meant astrologer *Kaniyan Punkunran (Puram* 192) and *Kanimedai*, the author of *Eladi* were poets and astrologers of the Sangam age. *Perunkani* meant the chief astrologer. The poem 229 of *Kudalur Kizar* states how once the people of the Chera country saw on *kartigai* day of Panguni a star rising in the air and then falling back into water. The people believed that it portended grave calamity. However to add conviction to the popular belief, it so happened that the Chera king breathed his last after the lapse of seven days of this omen. The knowledge was based on an empirical study of astronomy and the movement of stars. Even though the astrological forecasts were the products of superstitious beliefs, many of them have survived even to this day in our State. The fisherfolk even now depend on the moon's phase to start their fishing activity on the seas and on this basis they have developed a lunar computation of time. The agriculturists also consider the movements of the sun and the seasonal fluctations for cultivation. The knowledge acquired over the years had became part and parcel of their traditional equipment. The astronomy was first lunar and then strictly solar-sidereal. The Jovian Circle of five revolutions of Jupiter of sixty years which regulates the chronology of South India, is no part of Aryan System.[225] The same is the case with the familiar circle of twelve years for domestic events quite familiar among the Tamilians.[226] It is pertinent to remark that those religious

225 M. Sreenivasa Iyengar Tamil Studies, 1914, Madras, pp. 192–93.

226 Ibid

festivals which are distinctly of Tamilian origin varied in respect of time only with the fluctations between diurnal and solar times and differed from the other Hindu festivals which vary extensively under the lunar sidereal system of the Aryans.

Music

The Tamilakam of the Sangam age of which Kerala was an integral part had not only a well-developed literary tradition but also had a conspicuous measure of significance in the field of fine arts like music, dance, drama and painting. The concept of *Muttamil* comprising *Iyal*, *Esai* and *Natakam* had attained popularity as early as the Sangam age. Tradition ascribes these threefold classification of Tamil language to sage *Agastya*. Whatever be the truth of this tradition it is certain that there existed in Sangam age many treatises on music and drama. In *Pattinappalai* it is stated that the people of the city of Kaveripoompatanam assembled at a common place to witness dance performances and musical recitals. The Pattupattu mentions a class of bards called *Vairiyar*[227] who used to provide music in the public assembly of the village. The ubiquitous Panar were roving minstrels who sang the glories of Kings and chieftains and regaled the public with their performances. The Kings and chieftains in their turn used to gift them handsomely.- *Purananuru* mentions the gift of lotus flowers made of gold as well as flowers knitted together with a silver string. Cheraman Palai Padiya Perunkadungo of the Cheras was a well-known patron of the performing arts. The consorts of Kings and chieftains bestowed their munificience on musicians. the lullabies known as *Usalvari*, the *Unjal* Songs, *Vallaipattu* etc. are often referred to in the Sangam works. The word *Esai* which denotes music in tamil means that which moves or melts people's minds. The *Tolkkappiyam* mentions that the rocks in the Podiyil hills were melted on hearing the songs of *Agastya* The poetic hyperbole of the Sangam poets refer to highway robbers disarming themselves and wild animals running pell-

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227. Vairiyar are identified as Panas, renowned bards of the Sangam age.

mell and damsels falling in love under the spell of alluring music. The seven *swaras* or noted identical with *sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da* and *ni* (the Sanskrit equivalents of Shadjam, Rishabham, Ghandaram, Madhyamam, Pancharnam, Daivatam and Nishadam respectively) were known as *Kural, Tuttam, Kaikkilai, Uzhai, Izhai, Vilari* and *Taram*. Tunes appropriate to different regions and different parts of the day and night were evolved by these ancient savants. A wide variety of musical instruments were in use. In the later work *Silappadhikaram*, as many as 108 different kinds of musical instruments are enumerated. There were as many as 30 drums made of leather known as *Idakkai, Maddalam, Padagam, Parai* etc. The prominent among the musical instruments were leather instruments, stringed instruments and wind instruments. The *Maddalam* used in music and dance performances in Kerala now can be equated with Mulavu of the classics and the *Chenda* with the *Parai* of the Sangam age. The leather instruments in the *Pancha Vadya* of temple festivals in Kerala have all their counterparts in the classics though the old names have disappeared. The string instrument *Veena* may probably might have been perfected from *Yaal* or lute mentioned in the classics. The circular gong of bell metal, and the cymbal used in *Kathakali* have been equated with the *Paantil* and *Callikai* and *Karatikai* of the Sangam epoch. The wind instruments like the *Thampu, Kuzhal* etc. have all survived with slight variations in names in the flutes and bugles of the present day performances in Kerala.

The nucleus of the classical Indian music is to be traced not in the melodies of the samaveda but in the early Tamil folk music, where the *ragas* and *talas* can be found in a crude form. The word *pan* which means *raga* and is associated with Panan[148] of the Sangam literature. The savants of Karnatic music trace the origin of many terms used in Sanskrit musical treatises to Tamil viz., *Kuranji*, the name of a *raga* (Tamil *Kurinci*) *Kambala*, the name of a *jati* (Tamil *Kampalai*, the sound of a lute) and *upali* and *nilotpali* the names of *ragas* (Tamil *Neythal* which like *Utpal* and *nilolpala* means a blue waterlilly and is the name of a Tamil *raga*). The names of many instruments

228. *Panas* are even today low caste musicians in Orissa, their counterparts in Andhra known as *Malas*.

used in Karnatic music are borrowed from ancient Tamil viz., the *mulvau* (same as *Mrdanga*), *Kuzhal* (the bambood flute), the *damaru*, *the panava*, the *muraju* and the *murali* etc.

The *rasa* theory of Sanskrit aesthetics also owes its origin to early Tamilakam. The seven *Meyppatu* found in *Tolkappiyam* are identical to the Sthayibhava of Natyasutra.

Dancing

Dancing had attained a high degree of perfection during the Sangam age. The kings and chieftains patronised dancers like Pari and *Kopperuncholan*. *Uraiyar Sattanar* is eloquent on the patronage given to the dance performance by Nalankelli. *Attam*, Kuttu and Kunippu were the terms used to signify dancing. *Tolkappium* mentions two forms of dance *Vallikkuttu* and *Kazhanilaikkuttu*. *Vallikkuttu* is supposed to have been staged as a sort of invocation to *Valli*, the consort of *Murugan*. *Kazhanilaikkuttu* celebrated the heroism shown by soldiers in their fight against the enemies. There was another dance called *Purattinai Iyal*, held in honour of a ruler who fell fighting. In this dance sword-play was prominent. Ritual dances are mentioned in *Kurunthokai* and *Madurai Kanchi*. The later Sangam work *Silappathikaram* speaks of religious dances like *Kudam* staged by cow-herds *Kuravaikkuttu* was held in praise of Vishnu, Vettuvavari to please Kottavai or *Durga*, the Goddess of victory. The *Kuravaikkuttu* [229] like the *Tunangai* was a solo dance. It was first common in the Marutham region and later spread to *Kurunji* and *Mullai* regions. The *Kurava* soldiers embellishing their bodies with palmyrah garlands indulged in a frenzy in a ferocious type dancing producing shrill voices. Tunangaikkuttu though originally asociated with the trimphant armies performed in the battlefield, was later on performed by groups of women in the *Manrams*. The women dancers known as *Viraliyar* often staged their performances in the company of their husbands. The professionals of the art

229. Some historians connect the word *Kuravai* (the shrill voices made by women on auspicious occasions) with this dance performance.

forms were known as *Kuttar* and *Porunar*.[230] That the solo dance attained a high level perfection is testified by the statement of *Illangovadigal* in *Silapathikaram* that "Madavi displayed her dance exquisitely in strict conformity with the prescribed rules". There was systematic arrangements for imparting training in this art from. *Adiyarkku Nallar* states that the trainees were to be proficient in the 64 arts. The trainees were given instruction in the *Vettiyai* or dance to be enacted at the royal courts and the *Poduviyal* or the popular performance. We get detailed descriptions of the body and limb movements, the poses, gestures etc. There is a picturesque description of the superb dance of Siva by *Kuttachchakkiyan* performed before *Cheran Shenkuttuvan* and his queen. It is said that *Bharata* borrowed largely from the Isai, the ideas incroporated in his Natya Sastra and this is corroborated by the fact that *Bharata's Natya Sastra* appeared after that *Dashina Marga* or the southern pattern of music had attained a high degree of perfection. The Devadasi *damsels* was called *Virali* who performed the dance during festivals. *Kootiyar* played on the drums. The male dancer was called *Porunan*. The drum was called *Parai*. A special kind of dance called valli was performed by the lower strata of society. Seven or Nine *Kodichi*[231] or Kurava women joined hands and sang and danced in a ring. Tolkkapiyar calls this dance *Vadavalli*. He observes "other Vallis (creepers) will fade but not this one". The Kodichis danced and sang the *Vallai* song when the *Kuravas* buried their dead warriors to the beating of the war drums and planting of *Virakkal* over the tombs in honour of the dead. The art of dance as a cultural norm was later on restricted to a particular community called Devadasis and at present this institution has become a thing of the past. But group dances are not uncommon even now The *Thiruvathirakali* is even now very common among the women and girls of Kerala. The tribal people of Wynad even to-day perform social dances. It is customary among them to perform group dances to propitate

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230. They are equated with the Devadasis of later days. Inscriptions mention these Devadasis under various names such as Tevaradiyal. Tevadiyal and Adigal The daughter of Sthanu Ravi was known by name Kizhanadigal. It is also to be noted that the term *Adigal* is seen affixed with the names of Kings as a mark of respect

231. Kodichi in Malayalam means dancing girl.

the gods. A kind of solo dance known as *Tirayatam* is staged by the Malayan tribes in Malabar in which the participants dance to the tune of music with swords in their hands. The *Velakali* performed in some famous temples in Kerala is a sort of martial dance where the participants use a shield and a stick. A detailed study of the modern norms of music and dance in Kerala confirms that the nucleus is derived from the Sangam tradition.

Drama

In the Sangam Epoch both dancing and acting were expresed by the common term *Kuttu*. The only difference between dance and drama was that in the latter a story was represented on the stage. In *Tolkappium* there is reference to *Nataka Valakkilum ulakiyal Valakkilum* From *Maduraikanchi*, we learn that dramas were enacted at night during festive occasions. *Silapathikaram* refers to three types of curtains used in the staging of the drama. The curtain on the stage was known as *yelini*. Some suggest that the Sanskrit word *Yavanika* denoting curtain was adopted from *Yelini Adiyarkku Nallar* suggests that *Varikkuttu* denoted drama. *Varikkuttu* was divided into 8 kinds. There were separate techniques and notes of acting for each one of these forms in accordance with the scenic effect. He distinguishes 21 poses and describes each one of them. However the available facts show that drama was not a neglected piece of art form during the days of Sangam.

Painting

Sangam clssics refer to the figures of Gods and scenes of nature painted on walls and canvas. The *Pattinappalai* refers to pictures on the walls of the temples at Kaveripoompattanam. In *Purananuru* there is reference to *Chittira Madam* in the royal palace of a Pandyan King. The *Madurai Kanchi* refers to the existence of painting on the walls of the Jain monasteries in Madurai. The *Manimekhala* also refers to the painting in the Buddhist temple at Kanchi. We are led to believe that the Jains were the first to initiate the practice of painting on the walls There is reference to astronomical drawings representing the position of planets on the ceilings of the palace of the Pandyan King

Nedumchezhian. Ovium was the word used for painting and painters were called *Oviya Makkal*. *Nattinai* has drawn a comparison of a beautiful damsel to the painting of a girl executed by a skilful painter.

Manram

An important institution of the Sangam age was the *Manram*, also known as *Poduvil* (general meeting place). Each village had its own *Manram*. *Manru* or *Manram* means public place. It is pointed out by some scholars that the origin of the Sanskritised name Sangam is from the institution known by indigenous name like *Manram* or *Kudalavai*. In early literature this place is spoken of as *Podiyil* also. The *Mullai* poems speak of the herds of the kine pasturing in Kurumporais and cows lowing for their calves crowding into the *Manrus*. The *Manrams* were public places where herds of cattle were kept for fear of raiders. Armed sentries raised the alarm with drums.The affairs of the villages were discussed in the *Manrams* under the shade of a banyan tree. The *Manram was also a place of worship and also the venue for festivals. It was the duty of the Kuyavar* (Potter) to offer food to the deities at the *Manrams*.[232] *Manram* was also the place where justice was dispensed. The disputes between individuals or groups were settled in the Manram by the elders of the village. As a place where virtue or *Dharma (aram)* was enforced, it was also described as the *Aram Valarkkum Manram*. It was also a place of public charity known by the appellation *Ulaka Aravi*. It was also a place of public amusement where older people of the village enjoyed dice playing and other games at stakes. Visitors to the villages were lodged in the *Manrams*. It was here that the poets *(Panans* and *Viralis)* entertained the people with their compositions. The wandering minstrels (bards) roamed from *Manrams* to *Manrams* and subsisted on the gifts they got from the people and the rulers From *Kuruntokai* we learn that the pupils of the *Pallis* lived in the rest houses in *Manrams*. The trees like the banyan known as *Kandu* or *kaval Marams* sacred to particular deities were planted in the public places in the *Manrams*. Every settlement had a *kaval maram* surrounded

232. Nattinai, 200–4

at its foot a raised platform called *Manram* on which were installed the images of their Gods and Stones of their deceased ancestors. It is said that the annual festival called *Pongal* originated from the offering of each family to the gods and its departed ancestors. The *Manram* and its assembly were known among the Nayars upto the 17th century The Malayalam word for Manram is Mannam[233] Manram was the place where the *Lokar (martially trained men) staged Vattakkali* or folk dance in which adult showed the suppleness and nimbleness acquired in the *Kalaris. Pataikkali* (war dance) was another folk dance. It is said that the *Kunnisseri Kurımatti Kali* and the Chittur Konganpada and theOnathallu and the Angapor or combat by battle are reminiscent of the defunct performances at the *Manrams.* The demonstration of skill in acrobatics, boxing, fencing, wrestling which still attract thousands to the annual festivals of the big temples like Vaikom also remind us of this tradition.

The *Poduvil* or *Manrams* or *mannam* played a key role in the social and political life of the village and it represents the existence of non-communal individual land ownership in rural South India from ancient times. Some historians find the nucleus of democratic government in the villages of this traditional Indian social structure and some others the reason for the stagnation of earlier South Indian society in these self-sustaining village communities[234].

Festivals

Though temples had not became an emotion, sentiment or concept in the daily lives of the people, festivals occupied a pride of place in those remote periods of history. The annual or cyclical (every 12 years) village goddess festivals during the Sangam period showed important ideological similarities to western ethnic group ceremonies based on blood and territory Festivals of the period far from being religious represented

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233. Standing place, a place of judgement or discussion under the village tree in the assembly of citizens. Gundert Nighandu, p. 720, Kottayam, 1962.

234. The existence of *Manrams* or public property in each village, the communal holding of land are cited by some historians to establish that private ownership of land existed in Kerala even during the Sangam age.

ethnic activities. It was more secular rather than religious in characteras the responsibility for celebrating village goddess festivals rested upon the shoulders of village organizations like the *Manrams*. According to modern researchers festivals denote "the Dravidian folk cultural traditions". The village female deity *Amman* or *Devi* was looked upon as protectress[235] and as fertility symbol of the village clan or locality. So in assessing the festivals of the Sangam age one is led to interpret them as occasions of joyous revelry mingled with religious fervour of the society. Pre-eminently they were secular. The festivals were conducted at specified places, in temporary structures built on with sugarcane stems and the roofing decorated with the ears of paddy[236]. During the festivals drums were played, lamps lit and music and dance performed. The commencement of the festivals was preceded by drum beating. The shops were kept open throughout the day and night. The festivals in honour of *Kaman* (the Lord of Love), *Indiran*, *Aatirai*, *Murugan* and *Onam* were religious in character. Kaman festival was also known as *Villavan*, *Vilavu*. *Kalithokai* depicts it as the festival of the deity with the bow as insignia or the festival of the Lord or the festivalofthe summer season.[237] If the husband happened to be away during the celebration of the festivals his wife was grief stricken. Women used to dance fully bedecked during the festival. The *Indran* festival was in honour of the deity *Indran*. This deity is said to have had an axe. He had a temple of his own[238]. The Onam festival is referred to in Madurai *Kanchi* as celebrated in the city of Madurai during the time of Nedunchezhian. It was celebrated on the day with the asterism

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235 It is worthy of notice here that the name Anyankavu means Aryan's Guard. Aryan or Arya i. e. Hariharaputra: The common Tamil equivalent of whose name is Aiyanar is supposed to be guardian of the boundaries. *Kavu* is the Malayalam equivalent of the Tamil *Kaval*, Guard. Achchankovil is the temple of Achchan, i.e., of Appan, father. The father referred to is Siva. The use of Achan for Appan is given by the classical Tamil grammars as an illustration of the Tamil of the Kundanadu, the western country i.e., Travancore. p 25. A History of Tinnevelly Bishop R. Caldwell, 1982, N Delhi.

236. *Purananuru* 22 1416.

237 *Kulavi Veenil vilavu etir Kollum*, Ibid. & *Kali* 36 9.

238 *Purananuru* 241 3.

Onam (the birth day of *Mayon* or Vishnu) favourable to the deity *Mayon* who had destroyed the demons. The victorious soldiers dressed in blue attire and inebriated in a zeal of victory part took in the revelry. Sumptuous feasts with liquor would be conducted during the occasion. Probably this festival might have been a religious event as it was conducted in honour of the deity *Mayon*[239] or Vishnu. From the account of the celebration of the festival in the city of Madurai it is presumable that this celebration was prevalent throughout Tamilakam in the Sangam age. The Alvars of the 7th century and the inscription of Sthanu Ravi also refer to it. Scholars contend that this festival fell into oblivion with the revival of Saivism and the prominence given to *Athirai* festival sacred to the Siva. It is to be recalled in this connection that *Onam* is sacred to Lord Vishnu of the Venkita or Tirupathi hills. The Sangam works *depicting* the *Lord of Venkita hills as Nediyon* (the towering one who measured the vast universe according to *Nachinarkiniyar)* explains why the Tirupathi hills are mentioned as the northern boundary of Tamilakom, attributes the reason to the facts that it is the place where the great seers did penance to the Lord who measured the universe. *Nammalvar* in his celebrated *Tiruvaimozhi* says: "he who measured the three worlds dwells on the Tiru-Venkita hills (Tirupathi)". *Onam* is even now considered as sacred to Lord Vishnu enshrined at Trikkakara which once formed one of the thirteen *Divya Desoms* of *Malai Nadu* held sacred by Vaishnavites. The Vaishnava Saint Periazhvar in his devotional songs, the *Tiru Pallandu* and other *Pathikams* in touching words depicts as follows: "Oh Lord Tiru Onam is the 7th from today. I have begun the festival with the auspicious song of benediction *(Pallandu)* sung by damsels with melodious voices. The delicacies of rice and fruits meant for Thee are well prepared. Do not go away as usual with your grazing cattle to the jungle from tomorrow. Remain at home and delight us in your charming attire". An inscription in the shrine of Trikkakarai makes mention of *Avani-Onam-Aaduvan* (the donor for the feeding), on *Onam* day in the month of *Avani (chingam)* and the arrangements made for its celebration which lasted for 28 days. During the Kulasekhara period this festival was attended by all the Naduvazhis of Kerala. Some historians have even contended

239. *Madurai Kanchi* Verses 590 – 94, 596 – 99.

that the origin of the Kollam Era was in commemoration of this ancient festival.

Thiruvathira

Another chief festival was *Thiruvathirai*. The *Paripadal*, a collection of songs on a variety of themes has a full stanza describing the bath of maidens inthe riverof *Vaigai*; stanza 11 of this collection by the poet *Nallandavanar* says that on the full moon day of *Thiruvathirai* the ceremony commenced with the help of learned brahmins praying for the fertility of the wide earth and spright braceleted maids led by elderly women bathe in the river as the frost rains in the dawn. The *Vaigai* has witnessed all this. Thanksgiving was rendered to this river for penance followed by bath in its waters which assured maidens husbands of their longing Shivering in the chill air they sought the warmth of the Vedic fires kindled on the banks of the holy river by holymen The picture presented by this stanza conveys the magnitude of the festivity which formed the basis of the *Tiruppavai* and the *Tiruvempavai*. The festival was also known as *Ambayadal* meaning a performanceinhonour of *Amba* or *Devi*. It also bore the appellation*Margali Niradal* or *Tai Neeradal* signifying the fact that the bath took place either in the month of *Dhanu (Margali)* or *Makaram (Thai)*. This variation is due to the ancient method of calculation which began with the full moon day, the latter half of the present *Dhanu* and the former half of the modern *Makaram* togther formed the old month of *Dhanu* in the Sangam age[240]. This festival has been called *Pavai* and *Pavaipattu* in Tamil Literature[241]. The *Pingala Nighandu* tells us that girls of the ages five to nine specially resorted to this festival. "During the observance the maidens would sing the praises of the Lord and touch not milk or ghee. Nor would they paint their eyes with collyrium nor adorn their tresses with flowers. Shunning all evil in thought and speech, and extending their helping hands in charity, the maidens go about, serenity enthroned in their hearts. Various noises would mingle in pleasant confusion: the blare of the conch, the clatter of the big drum, and the notes of the singers of benediction to God[242]". For some reason or other this fast

240 Some aspects of Kerala and Tamil Literature. Part II – M. Raghava Aiyangar, p. 12

241 *Tolkappiam, Porulathikaram*, Sutra – 461.

242 Ibd. Opp cit p 13

sacred to *Devi* or *Sakthi* has gone into oblivion in Tamil Nadu leaving its relic in Kerala in the observance of *Thiruvathirai*. "The plunging into the deep waters of the lake and pressing them while singing the praises of "His feet" *(Thudichu kuli)* as enshrined in the *Tiruppavai* and *Tiruvempavai*,[243] reminds us of the joyous occasion of *Thiruvathirai* in the month *Margali (Dhanu)* observed by the women of Kerala, and preserved in the several books on the Kerala folklore. The Thiruvathirai festival is today celebrated in honour of *Siva*. In the Cochin area of Kerala during the *Thiruvathirai* festival the virgins observe certain rituals amusing themselves by swinging on the *unjal* and dancing to the accompaniment of *Thiruvathiraipattu*, a series of melodious songs specially sung for the occasion, and eat the flour of the *Kuvai* root. The newly married woman celebrates the first *Thiruvathirai* in the month of *Dhanu* (December-January) succeeding her marriage as *Poothiruvathira*. Early in the morning they bathe in the river slapping the water with their hands. These are considered as an echo or the attempted immolation of *Rati*, the consort of *Kaman* when the latter was burned to ashes by Lord *Siva*. The virgins of southern Kerala engaged themselves in a game called *Thumbi Thullal*. In this game a girl sits surrounded by other girls who sing songs in praise of *Kaman*. Further the *Rati-Manmadhan* episode is a theme in the classical dance *Bharatha Natyam*. These may be the remnants of the festivals *Pavai* and *Pavaippattu* of the Sangam epoch[244]

Bharani

The festivities associated with Bharani are held to be the relics of the practices immortalized in Tamil literature and confirmed by epigraphical surveys. The commentary of *Perasiriyar* to the *Tolkkappium* states that the day of the asterism *Bharani* is sacred to *Devi* otherwise called *Kottavai*. Delicious food

243. The *Tiruppavai* is a poem by Shri Andal describing a fast in which in days of yore the maidens of Gokulam observed for the love of Shri Krishna and bringing rains to the parched earth. The *Tiruvempavai* composed by Manikkavacagar also depicts a similiar fast undertaken by young maidens for propitiating Siva's dear devotees which is primary duty considered even more important than pleasing God.

244. Some authors confuse these festivals with the *Katyayani Vrata* mentioned in the *Dasamaskandha* of *Bhagavatam* and the *kama* festival known throughout India as Holi.

was offered to the Goddess and a special kind of dance called the Tunangai characterise the occasion. The early Cheras had a king renowned for his performance of the *Tunangai* dance on the battlefield who won the title Adukotup attuccheralathan. It is held by some scholars that a type of poetry entitled the *Bharani* arose based on these practices. The *Bharani* poems depict a sort of self sacrifice undertaken in those days for the fulfilment of deeply cherished desires. The *Kalingattupparani* is perhaps the best poem of this type depicting an unimaginable piece of self-immolation. The *Tolkkappiyam* tells us of the existence of this sacrifice. Several inscriptions of Tirukoyilur taluk of South Arcot district refer to a certain Parani Nonpu observed by women[245]. *Kakkaipadiniyar* in her praise of *Adukotup attuccheralathan* says in the battlefield in front of the shining lamp when the dancing women perform the dance of death this king joined them and danced like a roaring bull much to their joy. The queen hearing of this aimed at him in anger the small red *Kuvalai* flower. Minili of Kasaragode who killed *Athiyan* in the battle of *Pazhi* is said to have performed this dance in the battlefield. Many poems of *Purananuru* describe Kuravaikkootu, in the battlefield when men and women gather round the corpse of the fallen king or chieftain. There is also mention of *Kuravaikootu* to the sound of *Tondaka* drums for propiating *Muruga* It is claimed that the rituals associated with *Bharani* festivals in Kerala are really the relics of the practices occuring in Sangam literature. The effigies of huge uncouth figures are even today taken out in procession at Shertallai and other places reminding of the demons gathering on the Bharani day in Tamil poems. The Ghoshavatra and Padayani indicate the march to and array on the battlefield and the term *Arp u* meaning the victorious war whoop are all borrowed from the Sangam literaure. Some authors consider the word *Talappoli* as a corruption of the Tamil word *Talaip p ali*, the name for the act of decapitation described in the *Parani p oem*. The *Bharani* festivals are celebrated with all pomp and splendour in the Bhagavathi temples at Shertallai, Sarkara, Kodungalloor etc on the *Bharani* day in the month of *Meenom*.

Raghava Aiyangar is of the view that presumably the custom of placing offerings on a plate arose out of the mistaken etymology

[245] The Madras Epigraphical Report 1938 No 458 - 461

of the corrupted form *Talabali* as "offerings on a Tala or plate". In view of the above and the fact that Kerala is even to this day the repository of many customs and usages now extinct in Tamilnadu it is quiet possible that the practices connected with *Bharani* is a relic of the observances preserved in Tamil poems.

Karthika

A festival common in the Sangam age and ever since is the festival of lights on the **karthika** day of the *karthikai* month every year. It was celebrated on the day on which the moon is in conjunction with the constellation, *karthikai. On this occasion* houses and temples are profusely lighted with row of earthernware lamps. The *karthika Deepam* has been described in Akananuru as a *Peruvila* (great bonfire festival). The karnarnadu of *Kuttanar* refers to the beauties of nature during the festival of the *karthika deepam.* Even now the *Karthika deepam* festival is widely celebrated in various parts of Kerala.

The festival in honour of Lord *Muruga* might have also been celebrated in the ancient Chera country in spite of the fact that there is no reference to this festival in the verses assigned to the Cheras. Even now there are many temples in honour of this deity in Kerala and the*Kavadi* Attam conducted by the *Velans* are supposed to be a counter part of *Veriyattam* performed by the *Velans* through out Tamilakom in the Sangam age. Even today the *Velans* practise certain rituals before they perform the Kavdi *Attam* which resemble the same rituals practiced by the *Velans* of the classics. This dance has been performed as a method of diagnosing the ailments of the young girls. The *Velan* performed the dance after propitiating the God and this is supposed to remove the evil spells that afflicted the girl or woman during confinement. Though the festival acquired a religious tinge over the years it is significant to note that it was originally celebrated as an agricultural festival on a similarity with the festival of lights of the agriculturists of the Chola country soon after the conclusion of preparatory cultivation and sowing.

Another festival in which the agriculturists of the Sangam age seem to have participated was a kind of water festival. The

Teerthavari or *Teertham Kodukkirathu* is another name for this water festival. In *Pattinapattu* there is a reference about a water festival (*Arat*) in which the Chera ruler bathed and swam in the river in the company of his relatives and associates and dined with them[246]. There is reference to this festival in later works like *Silapathikaram*. The *Arat* festival in the Sree Padmanabha Swamy temple in Trivandrum in which the royal house of the erstwhile State of Travancore participated and the *Kadalattu* (Purificatory bath in the sea) of the king is considered by historians as a vestige of the water festival of the Sangam age. The *Arat* festival is still celebrated in some prominent temples of Kerala – Guruvayur, Ettumanoor etc., probably a remnant of the teerthavari of the Sangam age.

The *Tiravattam* and the *Velakali* in which the martial spirit forms the core of the performances which still survives in the temples of Kerala during festivals remind us of the martial dance performed by the soldiers of the *Mallar* class[247]. The *Mallar* who adorned their bodies with palmyrah and *Vakai* flowers took part in the festival of swords according to *Pattinapattu*.

The festival of *Uzhi Vizhavu* was a celebration conducted in the Chera capital, Vanchi. During this festival the people used to dance in the street adorning themselves with a belt of bells around their girdless. Judging from the semantic aspect

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246 A translation of the appropriate lines in the 4th decade of the poem is given below "Clothed by the seas, and dotted with hills lies this part of the earth (the Chera country) here, the voice of multitudes of men lifting their hands and saying prayers, fills the air in all directions. As the worship of Lord Vishnu begins, the officiating priests ring their bells which send clear peals afar. At this sign, the eager, fasting multitude bathes in the cold waters of the sea and a bustling noise fills the air. The purificatory bath over, people go to pray their obeisance to the great Lord who wears garlands rich with the hum of bees on his bosom, besides the Goddess Lakshmi. Ever and anon, the great chakra of the Lord (Vishnu) dazzles everybody with its brilliance. Presently, having prayed to the Lord of the fragrant clusters of *tulasi* garlands, the crowds go home, full of satisfaction in their hearts. As though to gladden these multitudes on their way home, the full-orbed moon rises, dispelling the black darkness of the scene. Even as the benefiction of the moon, O Chera King, you come to the aid of suffering men of high estate and rule valorously". – Some aspects of Kerala and Tamil Literature, p. 23 – 24.

247 The *Malavar*, *Mallar* and *Maravar* formed the martial classes of the Sangam age. Adigaman Neduman Anji was a chief of the Malabar

of the term, one author states that it was the custom of the people to remember the ancestors or past incidents at least once a year on a particular day. According to him the festival was an occasion to celebrate a political gain or the heroics of an ancestor[248].

The reference to *Tai Un* (feast) held in the month of *Tai* (January-February) after the termination of a *Nombu* (fast) is held by some historians as to the celebration of *Tai Pongal* in the Sangam age. But the semantic connotation of *Pongal Ilamazhai* and *Pongal Venmazhai* occuring in Sangam works indicate the onset of the rain. It is not clear whether these feasts are indentical with the *Tai Pongal* of modern times which is a harvet festival.

Many of these festivals and ceremonies were either local or regional or communal or religious. The excessive indulgence in intoxicating drinks formed a regular feature alongside dancing, music and other merriment. However these festivals are even to-day enjoying a resurgence of popularity.

Food

The *Tolkkanniıım* ascribes an importance to food next to God. The floral and faunal milieu was the conditioning factor in respect of diet. Food production was something more than bare subsistence economy. Rice was the chief staple food, whose cultivation enjoyed the benefit of irrigation. There are ample references in the early Sangam classics to tanks and other agricultural facilities. The early Tamil Kingdoms were located in rice producing nuclear areas like the settlement of the Cholas on the Kaveri, the Pandyas on the Tampraparni and Vaigai and the Cheras on the Kerala coast. The *nattar* formed the important peasant group. Irrigation was the basis of agriculture. There were tanks fed by riverine channels. In many inscriptions are mentioned tax exemption granted to *Kulangal* (water tanks), *Udaruttupponavaykkalgal* (water channels passing through), *Pulattirakulam* (tank in a cultivation field), *Kalanikkulam* (tank in a paddy field), *Ururinkululam* (common tank for drinking water), *Karai* (bund), *Kilnattukku nirpayappona*

248. Culture of Ancient Cheras, Opp cit p. 151.

Vaykkal (water channel carrying water to the nadu down below). *Vay* (big water channel). *nirodukal* (small water channel) *Kinar* (well) etc. All the above point to the importance attached to the utilization of water. The water tank *(kulam)* with a raised bund *(karai)* to store the rain water indicate the independent nature of the agriculture of the particular village and the water channels passing through the village carrying water to other villages *(vavkkal)* signifies the co-operation of villages in the proper utilisation of water. Some modern historians have taken this to mean that the water use pattern involving the co-operation of the people in an area transcending the village portion "confirming the view that social production was maintained in a larger area[249]".

The agricultural implements in vogue were the plough (kalappa) plough-share (ver) fixed to a yoke drawn by bulls and in some cases by buffaloes, a wooden leveller called *Palli (Maram)*. a teethed instrument attached to a plank called *Pallivadutal* drawn by oxen to remove the weeds.

There are references in the classics to boiled rice, cold rice, rice cooked with gooseberry, rice prepared with tamarind, *(pulichoru)* cooked millets, millet flour made cakes, pulses like horse gram, bengal gram *(kadalai)* etc., tubers like yam, etc. jaggery, milk, ghee, curd, fish, flesh of elephants, meat, honey, salt, pepper, vegetables used in the preparation of sauces, beans, fruits like mangoes, jack, coconuts, plantain, etc. The *Malaipadukadam* lays down that people ate not ony the flesh of rams, deer, hare and fowl but also that of porcupines, pigs, rats, boars, snails, tortoise etc. The use of toddy was common. There are references to *Kal, Naraou* and *Toppi Toppi* was produced by the fermentation paddy rice and bamboo rice. Toddy was also brewed out of millets There was also in vogue fermented juice of palmyra, wine imported by the Yavanas, fermented honey, juice extracted from sugarcane etc. The intoxicating drinks figured prominently on festive occasions. *Akananuru* compares the effect of liquor to that of snake venom. The *Perumpanattupadai* depicts the ever charming glow in the eyes of the woman who indulged in drinking. There was public

249. Page 54. South Indian History and Society. Studies from Inscriptions. Noboru Karashima O. U. P. 1985

feeding and references are there about common feeding places *(Arundunarsalai)*.

Dress

The garments made from barks of trees, plaited leaves as well as cotton and silk were worn. Generally males wore two pieces of cotton, one around the waist and the other, the other draped on the shoulders. Some of the poor folk wore only a piece of cloth around their waists. The fine texture of clothes has been lauded by many a poet of the Sangam age. In *Purananuru* the fine cloth woven with such fine thread that the individual yarns could not be noticed has been likened to smoke, the vapour of boiling milk, the outer skin of the snake and so on. Affluent females wore *Kalingam* a renowned variety of fine cotton. The *Kalingam* cloth of which copies references are there in the Sangam classics seems to have been manufactured in the Kalinga country. There are references to silk garments given to poets as a mark of distinction The king and his officials wore a jacket called *Kanchukam*. The inhabitants of the hilly regions adorned their loins leaves with flowers and garlands plaited together. These decorative garments called *Tazhai* were also worn on festive occasions. This has led some foreigners like Strabo to remark that complete nudity prevailed in old Tamilakom. *Tazhai* was mostly worn by maiden, prior to matrimony. The *Porattiyar* or public women wore the *Tazhai* while bathing with their paramours. Ascetics clothed themselves with the deer skin and other skins of animals. Adiyarkkunallar mentions about 36 varieties of dress. Tunics and the turbans were worn by kings, messengers and body-guards. During warm climate the skins of animals were used as beds. Unspun wollen clothing was also in vogue. Women did not cover their breasts. They decorated their breasts with sandal paste or flowers. The women singers of the *Panar* group used to go abut thus dressed with their sweet smelling hair tied as a knot. The flowers of jasmine, water lilly, margosa were all used to adorn the hair. The Adigaman Anchi, the chieftain of Takadur adorned himself with a garland of the Vetchi and Vengai flowers when he went to see his new born son. Sweetsmelling sandal paste was smeared on the chest and on the forehead. An ornamental mark adorned the heads of men

and women. The women applied a dark collyrium called *mai* to their eye-lids nd eye-brows. Besides women, men were also in the habit of dressing their hair with sweet smelling perfume and flowers. The animal hides were used for making sandals and used by warriors,hunters and others.

Ornaments

The use of ornaments was widespread during the Sangam age among men and women and children, rich and poor. Gold was the most favoured metal. It was variously known as Sempon (pure gold) *Sambunatham* (a variety of gold) *ihai* and Kanam. Precious and semi-precious stones in general and sapphire and ruby in particular were known as Mani. Diamond was referred to as *Kil* and *Vaviram*, pearl known by various names as *angarakan, taralam, tavalama* and *nittilam*. The more familiar terms like *muttam* and *muthu* were also used and the Tamil word mutta was sanskritized into Mukta. The Pandya port of Korkai was well known for its pearls, which was one of the luxury articles exported along with ivory and gems like beryl and corundum. The blue gem (sacred to Vishnu) was called *tirumanic* and emerald (*Margadam*) was often set with diamond in gold rings. Coral was imported and was known by different names such as *tuhir, tuppu* and *tuvar* and comprised of ten varieties There are copious references in literary works like *Silappadikaram* to the intimate knowledge of the Tamils of the period about the gems and their qualities. Rulers and chieftains adorned themselves with *Mudi* a special headgear indicating their status Defeat in battle meant the loss of *Mudi* to the triumphant adversary who wore a garland or anklet made out of it. While feudatories wore *Kurumudi* (shorter one) monarchs wore *nilmudi* (high crown). Head ornaments sported by women were known as *Deiva Uthi, Toyyaham, Pullaham, Makarappahuvai Vayantaham, Mattagamani* and *Sridaham.*

Given below are some of the important ornaments worn in that period

A. Neck Ornaments

Arams (garlands) generally made of pearls were in popular demand. The varieties of chains were known as. *Nittilattamam* also a pearl garland. *Polangal*-a gold necklace resembling the

modern *Kasumalai, Kovai, Sangili Savadi* (bundle of strings) *Tali*-an ornament worn by women and children-consisting of *aimpadaittali* and *pulippal tali mangalaani*-the sacred marriage symbol or badge.

B. Ear Rings

Ear rings were known as *todu* or *olai* usually made of gold with gems inlaid. Sometimes Conch was also used in making ear rings. *Kulai* or *Kundala*-a heavy curved ear ring hung low making the earlobe distended of Pallava and Cola sculptures depict the ornament as hanging from the ear and resting on the shoulder. It survives in theheavyear ornaments worn in South Kerala. Another interesting ornament *pullihai camarai*-bore the shape of an inverted flower and dangled from the ear. The other types of ear rings were the *Konnappu, Vali, Kudaikkadukkan, Kudambai.*

C. Waist Ornaments or Girdles

Waist ornaments or girdles were known as *Kaccai, Mekalai* and *Kanchi.* These belt shaped and embroidered ornaments usually consisted of several strings of pearls, or corals or other beads. Belts were also made of circular gold coins. The *Mekalai* was of seven strings and the *Kanchi* of eight strings. *Tirukkovai* (string of gems or beads) *muttarai* (thirty-two strings) Kalapam (ten strings) were the other girdles in vogue. The *Kurangu Sere* was an ornament hung over the thigh from the waist region and worn only by women.

D. Ornaments worn on the arms and hands

Todi and *tolyai*-meant-both an armlet and a bangle was worn on the shoulders as well. A circular jewelled ornament called the *Pandil* adorned the shoulder. It was made of deer skin in which gems were sown *(Pattuppattu VIII 9:12) Valai*, ring like bangle made of gold, corals, pearls, other gems, silver or conch was the most common bracelet adornment of the fore-arm. They were two piece ornaments and were fixed with screws or nails. The other bracelets were known as *Sudaham, Kadahad* and *Surppu.* Beautifully designed they were made of gold and precious stones. Rings worn on the fingers were variously known as *ali modiram* and *tali.* Made of gold and inlaid with rubies the rings were oval shaped. ***Silappadhikaram* mentions**

an ornament. *Pariyaham* which was a string or chain like device connecting the bracelet and the ring on the finger and the anklet and ring on the toe.

E. Anklets

Anklets were of various types some such as nupuram and *kittuvadam* were worn loosely, resting on the foot. Circular rings worn round the ankle were known as *Silambu Kudaisul*. The entire theme of Silappadhikaram, a literary masterpiece, is woven around the disappearance of a gem studded anklet of the Pandya queen. Besides, this ornament had a special significance for women in that it was used to denote marital status. The *Kinkini* was a jingling anklet made of bells stung round a circular ring. The bells resembled the mouth of a frog. Toe rings known as *Pariyaham ali* and *tal* were the ornaments adorning the toes. Rings were worn on all the toes.

The widespread usage of a variety of ornaments is a point to the comparative affluence of society in the Sangam age.

Trade

Trade, both internal andexternalhaddeveloped considerably. The primitive pattern of exchange of essentials on barter basis was common in the villages. But side by side with that, there were bazaars and markets *(Avanam)* where monetary transactions occurred with extensive business turn over. The people of the various regions sold the commodities produced in their respective lands to others in the neighbourhood and occasionally to those at a distance. Several references are there that paddy and salt served as measures of value. Paddy and salt were given as wages also The terms *kuli* and champalam originated from *kulam* and *Alam* (Agam 6 0:4 etc.) meaning food grains and salt respectively. The beaten paths and arid regions were used by the traders called *Vanikachchattukkal (Akam 39, 10)* and the commodities carried in carts or on donkeys *(Perumpan)*. The highways connecting villages and towns were known as *Peruvali* and tolls were levied at the entrance to towns and at cross roads. The coastal water ways and backwaters were used in the transportation of commodities through small vessels like *Odam (Akam: 101:12)* Ambi *(Ainkurunuru 98) punai, timil*

etc. There were *Allangadi* (evening or night markets) *Nalangadi* (Daytime bazaars). The wide variety of articles sold in the markets of Kaverippumpattinam and Madurai are described in detail in the epics. There is no doubt that indigenous coins were used. The gold *kasu, kanam, Palingu kasu* (shaped out of glass beads) etc. were some of them. A few of the poets of the Sangam age like Madurai Aruvai Vanigan[250], Sattanar, Uraiyur Ilampon Vaniganar. Kaverippumpattinattu Ponvaniganar.

Early Tamilakam had an extensive maritime trade. This remarkable growth of foreign trade is to be ascribed mainly to the availability of commercial products in the western region of Tamilakam now known as Kerala.

The Cheras were a maritime nation and commanded the Arabian and the Red seas. Samuel Livingstone in his work *The Sinhalese of Ceylon and Aryan Theory* pointed out that even the Romans felt the power of the Cheras during the time of Augustus Ceasar and this fact is referred to by the Roman Poet Horace in the following lines in Ode Book I No. XII (65 B.C.-8 B.C).

> Whether the Parthian threatening Rome
> His eagles scatter to the wind
> Or follow to their eastern home
> Cathay (Seras) and Ind
> Thy second let him rule below

The Greek English Lexicon refers to the *Seres* as an Indian people from whom the ancients got the first silk. This reference is based on the accounts of Strabo[251]. In all the classical writings from about the 5th century B.C. to above the 2nd century A.D. there are references to the Cheras as a seafaring people. It is held by many authors that the Arab traders were the descendents of the Dravidian navigators of old[252]. The

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250. Vanigan occurs in Purananuru. It does not refer to the Vaisyar Caste It is used only as a part of proper names.

251. Kerala in classical writings J R. Sinna Thampy. Journal of Kerala Studies. Vol IV, Part IV 1977, p. 508

252. Glimpses of World History. Pandit Nehru.

Dravidian sailors embraced Islam during their sojourns in Arabia for purposes of trade. That they were Dravidians is indicated not only by their language but also by their social customs such as, for e.g. marriages in which they followed the Dravidian practice of tying the *Tali* and giving dowry to the bride etc. Varthema as late as A.D. 1506 has described the people of Calicut (unto Calecut) as seafaring. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* lays down that a communication was open from the Red Sea to the country of 'the Seres'[253]. Filliozat has also pointed out that Sera of *Pliny* were actually the *Cerar* (Tamil for peoples of Kerala)[254]. In the Peutinger Table, a map prepared in the 1st century B.C. by Agrippa on the orders of Emperor Augustus and engraved on marble and erected near the Roman Forum, some towns in Kerala are indicatd. This means that Kerala was known to the citizens of Rome nearly 2000 years ago. The author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* particularises Nelcyndi, Paralia, Comari etc. as sea ports on the West Coast. Scholars are generally agreed that colonies of Dravidian traders settled in the Eastern Mediteranian. It is even pointed out that the Dravidians of India came to India from the Eastern Mediterranean and occupied territories in South India inabout500 B.C. That this has been so ethnologically and anthropologically has been accepted by many scholars. Ptolemy's Geography (about 100 A.D) throws light on the prevalence of Buddhism in Kerala and mentions Semne as a town in Chera. Sir Mortimer Wheeler finds an unitary aspect in the coastal civilizations of the Indian ocean and a certain cultural community of Arabia, East Africa and India since very early times.

The writings of foreigners like Pliny, Ptolemy and the author of the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea adumbrate valuable information to supplement the account of the commercial towns and areas mentioned in the classics. Pliny describes the journey from Ocelis in Arabia to India as follows:....."it is most advantageous to start from Ocelis. From thence they sail with the wind called Hippalos in forty days to the commercial station of India, named Muziris, which is not to be recommended on

253 William Vincent Vol II 1805 p 438.

254 Journal Asiatique quoted by Sinnu Thampi Ibid. p 505 - 6

account of the neighbouring pirates, who occupy a'place called Nitrias: nor does it furnish any abundance of merchandise. Moreover the station of shipping is far from the land and cargoes have to be loaded and unloaded in barges. The ruler of the country at the time of which I speak was Coelobothras. The same authority notes that....the region from which pepper is brought in barges hewn out of single trees is called Cottonara (Kuttannatu).

Ptolemy lists the following port towns, cities and rivers of the ancient Chera country. "Tyndis, a city Bramagara, Kalaikkarias, Mouziris, an emporium; mouth of the river Pseudostoms, Podoperoura, Semme, Koreoura, Bakarej, mouth of the river Baris, as the sea ports and rivers and Naroulla, Kouba, Paloura.....Passage, Mastanour, Kourellour, Pounnata where is beryl, Aloe, Karoura, the royal seat of the Kero-bothras, as the inland cities".

Pliny and Ptolemy agree in their location of the northern limit of the Tamil country on the Western Coast above Tundis *(Tonti)*. But the author of Periplus is clearer in his description of the northern limit of the West Coat of ancient *Tamilakam*. "..... *Tamilakam* commenced immediately south of the island Leuke or 'the white'.....which north-west of the modern town of Badagara, about eight miles from the coast, is still known to the natives as Thovak-kal or *Vellaikkal* 'thewhite rock'.

The author of Periplus begins his account of the journey with the description of the coastal cities of the Cheras and he says "Below the White Island (Thoovakkal) commences the kingdom of the Keprobotas styled Limurike, the first mart of which is Naoora, then Tundis, a large village close to the shore; and next to these Moozirls, a flourishing place frequented both by the native vessels from Ariake (Aryakam) and by the Greeks from Egypt. It lies upon a river, but at a distance of 20 stadia: and five hundred from Tundis, the intermediate space is equal whether you measure by land from river to river or take the passage by sea. (Naoora,Tundis and Moozirls) are succeeded by Nelkunda which is in another province under the Government of Pandion". The Romans are said to have had a force of two

cohorts (840-1200 men) at Muchiri to protect their trade and they had also erected a temple to Augustus at the same place. Ptolemy places the country of the Aioi, south of Bakarei. Nelkynda Elangkon, a mart, Kottiara, the metropolis, Bammala, Komaria, a cape town are mentioned by Ptolemy in the kingdom of the Aioi. Almost all the above cities can be identified with the towns and the areas in modern Kerala. Vanchi the capital of the Cheras is to be located somewhere in the vicinity of modern Kodungallur. Muchiri was an important harbour town which was an emporium of international commerce in pepper. *Akananuru* states that a Pandyan king carried away an idol from the city. The importance of the city as a hub of commercial activity is attested to by both the indigenous and foreign authorities. Musiris has been identified by all scholars with modern Kodungallur. It is referred to as Murachipattanam in the Valmiki Ramayana, as Muchiri in Sangam works and as Muyirikode in the Jewish Copper Plate of Bhaskara Ravi Varma. In the mid centuries of the Christian era it was known as Makothai, Mahodayapuram and Mahodayapattanam. Psudestomos in Greek which means false mouth is according to some Musiris.

XI THE KALABHRA INTERREGNUM*

There is no definite literary or epigraphic evidence relating to the Kalabhra Interregnum in Kerala History. It is presumed that the depredations of this marauding race[1] ensued the closing years of the early Chera rule. This epoch coincided with the arrival of Cosmos Indicopleustes, a Nestorian from Alexandria who arrived between 520 to 525 A. D. It is contented by certain scholars that the absence of reference to the Chera or Chola King or other chieftains suggests that *Kalittokai* was composed about the time when the Kalabhras had secured possession of a large part of Tamilakam[2]. The *Muttaraiyar* mentioned in the *Naladi Nanuru* is believed to belong to the stock of the Kalabharas[3]. The date of *Naladi Nanuru* has been assigned to a period ranging from 4th to 7th century A. D. The *Peruniattaraivar* mentioned in this book is taken to be indentical with the *Perumpidugu Muttaraivar* occuring in the *Sendalai* inscriptions of the 7th century A. D. Several historians commencing from Krishnaswamy Iyengar, R. Pannirselvam[4] and Mylai Seeni Venkataswamy[5] have written about the Kalabhra interregnum as having occured from the third century A. D. to the tenth century A. D. They are of the view that the Kalabhras may be said to have reigned from the third century A. D. to sixth century A. D. Added to this there are certain stone inscriptions of recent excavations revealing that the Kalabhras ruled up to ninth century in at least a small portion of Tamilakam. In the Sangam classics, there is mention of a *Kalavar Koman Pulli* being the ruler of Venkata country who patronised Tamil poets. This chief is said to have ruled over present districts of Dharmapuri and Salem. With the declining of the power of the Chola, Chera and Pandya triumvirate, the Kalabhras intruded

1. It is held by many a scholar that the names *Kalvar, Kalabrar* and *Kalappalar* occuring in stone inscriptions refer to one and the same race

2. A social History of Tamils. Vol. I, K. K. Pillay, Madras, 1975, p 108

3. Ibid, p. 124.

4. Tamilnadu and Kalabhra rule.

5. Tamilakam under Kalabhra rule

from the Venkata hill territory. From Malanad, they spread their tentacles to Chola, Pandya and Kongu country. In the early phases, they excluded Chola territory from their depredations as the Pallava influence remained supreme there. The present Sravana Belgola in Karnataka was known in the fourth century A. D as *Kalappapu Nadu.*[6]

The Jain text *Vattarathanai* states that Chandragupta Maurya renounced his kingdom, embraced Jainism and resided in the Kalapappu hills[7]. The modern Chandragiri hills were once known as *Kalapappupetta*. In the early half of the 5th century A. D. Acharya Buddha Thera who belonged to Chola territory and who was well-versed in Buddhist philosophy and a writer of several Buddhist texts wrote a book *Vinaya Vinichayam* at the behest of Kalabhra king Achutha Vikkanta while residing in Boothamangalam in Chola territory[8]. This Buddhist scholar lived in the time of the Sri Lankan king Serikuttan who ruled between 400 - 430 A. D. This Achutha Vikkanta is said to have defeated Chera, Chola and Pandya kings and annexed a major portion of Tamilakam and assumed the royal symbols of these rulers. It is claimed that Kalabhras rose to power during the unsettled political conditions in Tamilakam with the connivance of certain petty local chieftains[9].

Dalavaipuram Inscription mentions about the Pandyan king Paranthaka Veera Narayana uprooting the Kalabhra rule, which leads to the conclusion that Kalabhra ruled from 3rd century A. D to 8th century A.D

The Kalabhras who came South from the Tiruvenkata hills might have been vanquished by the Pallavas as mentioned by

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6. Dr M Chidananda Murthy, Kannada Sasanakala Samkrithika Adyayana 450 A. D – 1150 (1966), p. 70, 78.

7. Dr N. V. Krishna Rao, M. Kesava Bhatt, Karnataka Ithihasa Darsana, 1970, pp 13 – 14.

8. A. P. Buddha Dutta Contemporary Buddha Gosha, University of Ceylon Review 1945, Vol. III, No. I.

9. Pandyan Copper Plate – Velvikudi Copper grant – lines 39 – 46.

the Kassakudi Copper Pattayam which glorifies the conquests of Pallavan king Simha Vishnu[10]. Narasimha Varma I, the grandson of Simha Vishnu and the son of Mahendra Varma, is also stated to have conquered Chera, Chola, Pandya, Kerala and Kalabhra kings[11]. The title bore by Pallava ruler Rajasimhan -- *Kala Kalan, Kala Vikraman* is indicative of Pallava supremacy over Kalabhras according to some writers.

One of the 63 Nayanmars—Kuttruvathu Nayanar– mentioned in *Periya Puranam* is considered as belonging to the Kalabhra family by Tiruthondar Thiruvanthiyil Nambiandavar Nambi. There are also other reference like Kalanthay Kon and *Kolonthai Vendan* in *Periya Puranam*. The location of Kalanthai is not exactly definable. Mylai Seeni Venkataswamy places in Chola territory.[12]. K. K. Pillay also places it in Tondai Mandalam, but does not exactly state where it was[13]. On the contrary, it is located in Pandyanad according to certain other writers--They cite the existence of a place called Kalanthai also known as Karavanthapuram which place owed allegiance to Pandya rulers. To reinforce this contention, it is stated that a close confident of the Pandya king Jatavarman Paranthaka Nedumchadayan, by name Maramkari and his brother Maram Oyenan belonged to Kalanthai[14].

Recently, Tamil Nadu Government's Department of Archaeology excavated in Pulamkurichi in Ramanathapuram District an inscription considered to be of 3rd century A. D. and written in the time of a king Chentham Kuttran. This excavation of significance from several points of view depicts conditions of life in Tamilakom of that period. It is not known whether the king whose name is mentioned in the inscription, has any relation to Kuttran or Kuttruva Nayanar. It is also possible that the inscription may be of a later day say 4th or 5th century.

10 Pallava Copper Inscriptions No. 30, Kasakkudi Copper Plate, Sloka 20, p. 174.
11. Ibid, Canto 50, line 12, p. 55.
12. Kalabhra Rule in Tamilakom, p. 26.
13. History of Tamils, p. 182.
14. Pandyan Copper Plates 30, Seevaramangalam Copper Plates, lines 75—81.

In some of their copper grants, Chalukya rulers speak of attaining supremacy over Chera, Chola, Pandya and Kalabhra rulers as well. Vikramaditya I (655—81) according to the Hyderabad Copper Plate is credited with victories over Pallava rulers like Narasimha Varma I, Mahendra Varma II, Parameswara Varman II. His successors speak of triumphs over Chola, Pandya, Kerala and Kalabhra rulers as well[15]. Harihar Grant of Vinayaditya corroborates this testimony. However, the vanquished were not exterminated, leading to the conclusion that Kalabhras thrived in a portion of Tamil Nadu. The *Pattathal Mangala Copper Grant* of Nandi Varman Pallavan (Circa 8th century) also refers to Pallava victory over Kalabhras, which confirms the possibility of Kalabhra rule in at least certain portion of Tamilakom in 8th century[16]. A question is posed as to whether

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15. R. C. Majumdar, The Classical Age, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Series, Vol. III., p 247, 249

16. The Velvikudi grant of the Pandyas (Parantaka Nedumchadayan) and some Pallava charters mentions the predatory activities of the onsecure clan of the Kalabhras. Also in the writings of the Buddhadutta there is reference on the rule of the Kalabhras in the Cola country.

Then a *Kali* King named Kalabhra took possession of the extensive earth driving away *Adhirajahs* (Ancient Kings)— Also refer *Kongu Desa Rajakal*. The Vokkaleri plates dated 757 A. D. of Pulakesin also refer to Kalabhra Vikramaditya I fighting against the confederacy of the Pandya, Cola and Chera rulers. Among the confederacy of the Pallavas, Kalabhras are also mentioned. There is also reference about Kalabhras in the Velur inscription from Mysore (Mysore Archaeological Report 1936 No. 16). The *Navalarcharitai* of Tamil, records about the defeat of Cheras by the Kalabhras.

The Colas— K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Madras 1955—page 101. Sathianathaier identifies the Kalabhras with the *Kalavar*, a pre-datory tribe in occupation of the northern frontier of Tondaimandalam, whose chief, Pulli of Tirupathi mentioned in the Sangam Works (Page 263, History of India, Vol. I, Madras, 1952)

M. G. S. Narayanan equates Kalabhras in later Tamil works and inscriptions with Kadambas, (Page 7 and 17. Re-interpretation in South Indian History). But this identification is difficult to accept as it is not based on any historical evidence whatsoever. In the Sangam Works there is much less about the Kalabhra Interregnum in the Tamil Kingdoms than about its extinction. Further Halmidi inscriptions in Belur taluk of Karnataka cites the Kalabhras as the rival of Kadamba king Kakuthan in the 5th century A. D. (Mysore Archaeological Report 1936 No. 10).

the celebrated Vaishnavite saint Thiru Mangai Azhuvar who was a ruler turned saint, was a Kalabhra ruler Scholars like T. A. Gopinatha Rao, R. Nagaswamy etc. are inclined to this view[17]. The Velanchery Copper Plates recently excavated by the Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department also mentions Kalabhra conflict with Pallava ruler Aparaijithan[18].

Towards the close of the 9th century, some of the Kalabhra rulers moved towards Kongu country. They have been erroneously identified to be Cheras by some historians like K. V. Subramonya Iyer.[19] But this has been refuted by the excavation of the Archaeological Survey of India,[20] in Ponnivadi in Coimbatore District which specifically states Kalabhras as a distinct entity. In the Ponnivadi Inscriptions mention is made of the king Moolam Kandan Eravi as belonging to Kalabhras by the usage of his title of star of the Chandraditya Vamsa, whereas the Cholas and Pandyas claimed in their inscriptions lineage from either Sun or Lunar dynasty. Of late in 1984 the Tamilnad State Department of Archaeology has located two important inscriptions of Kalabhra kings at Vellalur in Coimbatore District. Vellalur is known to historians for its trade contacts with Rome in the early years of the Christian era. One of the two inscriptions is in *Vattezhuthu* characters while the other is in Tamil. Both seem to have been written in the 10th century A. D. The most revealing fact from these inscriptions is that the Kalabhra dynasty ruled a part of Tamil Nadu, Kongu country.

The Kalabhra became petty chieftains in the 12th and 13th century, whose influence was confined to Kongunad under the Cholas. They paled into insignificance by the 15th century.

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17. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, Sri Subramonia Ayyar, Lectures on the History of Shri Vaishnavas (1923), p. 26; R. Nagaswamy, Studies in Ancient Tamil Land Society, p. 90.

18. R. Nagaswamy, Tiruttani and Velancheri Copper Plates, Velancheri of Aparajitha Translation.

19. Historical Sketches of Ancient Deccan, Vol. II, p. 53.
20. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXX, VIII, No. 6, p. 39.

It is argued that the Kalabhras destroyed the already dominant Vaishnavite and Saivite traditions in Tamilakam. There is also a view that they were adherents of Jainism and its ardent propagators in Tamilakam. Another view holds them as Vaishnavites. However there is lack of conclusive evidence to prove their Jain or Vaishnavite affinity. But on the basis of Buddhist literature, it is almost certain that the early Kalabhras might be of Buddhist persuasion i.e. from 3rd to 6th century A. D. From the Tamil classics also we learn that they were adherents to the Buddhist religion. Some inscriptions make clear that they were not against Hinduism as upheld by certain historians. The Ceylon Buddhist literature mention of one Achutha Vikkanta of the Kalabhrakula in whose reign Buddhist monasteries were established and Buddhist monks enjoyed unstinted patronage in the Chola country. *Amitasagara* a Jaina grammarian of Tamil (10th century A.D) refers to Achutha Vikkanta as a Buddhist bigot and states that he had provoked religious antagonism. It is argued on the basis of the Ponnivadi inscription (where occurs invocation to Siva) that the later day Kalabhras were Saivites. All ancient literature of South India denounce the Kalabhras as evil Kings *(Kali Arazar)* who uprooted many *Adhirajas* and abrogated Brahmadeya rights. During their stampede the Cholas entirely disappared from Tamnadu. The Velir Chieftains who encountered the Cholas and the Pandyas are sometimes linked with the Kalabhras [21]

The Kalabhra interregnum must have affected Kerala also The legendary compilations *Keralolpatti* and *Keralamahatmyam* record that the rulers of the land had to be imported from the neighbouring countries and they assumed the title of *Perumal* The renowned Vaishnava Saint Kulasekhara Alwar in his poems claims sovereignty over Chera, Chola and Pandya besides the Kongu country and Kolli mountains. A date in the 6th century A. D has been suggested by some historians to Kulasekhara Alwar Possibly the reference may be attributed to the Kalabhra Interregnum in Kerala History It is to be pointed out here that some scholars have suggested that Kulasekhara Alvar lived in the 9th century A. D The Kalabhra

21 Salem District Gazetteer 1967, p 47

King Achutha Vikkanta is believed to have taken prisoner the Chola, Pandya and Chera Kings. Besides he exterminated many of the smaller chieftains. He even plundered temples. The Kalabhras terrorised the South for several generations until at last at the beginning of the 7th century they were finally defeated by the resurgent Pandyas under the leadership of Kadungon and the Pallavas under Simhavishnu

This dark period in the History of South India (3rd century A. D. to 7th century A. D.) saw the ascendancy of Buddhism and Jainism. The most characteristic feature of this period was the brisk literary activity in Tamilakam. The Eighteen Minor Works, *(Kilkkanku* or *Prabhandhes)*, *Silappathikaram*, *Manimekhala* and other works were written by acclaimed votaries of the "heretical sects" These works were all composed sometime between the 3rd and the 7th centuries when the Jain and Buddhist influence was at the peak in Tamilnad.

X KALABHRA INTERREGNUM AND AFTER

The Tamil *Navalar Charitai* states that the Kalabhra invader vanquished the combined might of a Chera, a Chola and a Pandya aggression. The Chera dominion thereafter did not revive its past glory as the Pandyas under a Kadungon mentioned in the Velvikkudi grant in the early 7th century and the Cholas under Vijayalaya in the 9th century dramatically staged a come back in the political arena of the Tamil country from their cloistered obscurity. The eastern and northern regions of Kerala passed under Pandya or Chola hegemony while isolated regions in the south-west remained under the independent Ays. When the Chinese traveller Hieuen-Tsang visited Kanchi in 640, one Sendan or Jayanthavarma of the Kaudungon dynasty who presided over the destines of the people is presumed to have conquered the Chera country. He assumed the title of *Vanavan* of the early Cheras. Ariskesari Maravarman, the successor of Sendan mentioned in the Velvikudi and Sinnamanur grants and an elder contemporary of Tirujnanasambadar, is said to have repeatedly

* I am indebted to Tiru Natana Kasinathan, Director of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu for some new facts incorporated in this section

defeated the Keralas and on one occasion took the Kerala king prisoner. The next king Kochadayan Ranadhiran held the title of Vanavan Sembian which signified his superior power over the Cheras. This king is also said to have defeated the chieftain of the Podiyil hill, Ay Vel at Marudur. Some historians rank this king as a contemporary of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar which is disputed by most scholars. The next ruler Jatila Parantaka Nedumchadaya, celebrated in the annals of Pandyan history as the greatest ruler and who is the main figure head of the Madras Museum Plates and who is mentioned in the Anamalai and the Trichinopoly inscriptions, was supported by the Cheras. He attacked the king of Venad and destroyed the military arsenal at Vizhinjam. He defeated Sadayan Karunanda of Malainadu and destroyed Ariyur Kottai. This Karunanda was positively related to Ays. The Sinnamanur and Dalavaipuram plates mention the victorious exploits of Srimara Valabha (835—862) in a battle at Vizhinjam, where the Chera who encountered him was slain. He destroyed the people of Kurunad[1]. The next Pandyan king Parantaka Viranarayan (880—900) had a Chera princess as one of his consorts. He gave her name to the

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1 It may be noted in this context that two 9th century Pallava inscriptions speak of one Kurumban Adityan, an unknown king of Kerala. An inscription in the Mathengeswara temple at Satyaveedu, Ponneri Taluk belonging to 9th regnal year of the Pallava king Aparajitha Varma registers a gift of land by one Kurumban Adityan alias *Kadupattipperaiyan* who was a king of the Chera country. Kurumban Adityan is described as *"Cheranadu Udaya"* in that record. Another inscription in the same place speaks of the same ruler and his queen Porrinangai (Pottu). In this record also Kurumban Adityan bears the appellection *Cheranadu Udaya*. The fourth regnal year of Aparajitha Varman corresponds to A. D. 884. It is not likely that the said Aditya was the famous Vikramaditya, the supposed predecessor of Varaguna because not only in the similarity of name but also in points of chronology the indentification finds corroboration. This has been further corroborated by some other facts as well. The usage Kurumban Adityan fits well to be the Vel ruler of Vizhinjam. The term *Kurumban* means *Kurunilamannan* in ancient Tamil and the Vels were widely known as *Kurunilamannar* in Sangam literature. Further there was a country called Kurumbanad (Kurunad) within the kingdom of Southern Vels and the people of Kurunad were called Kurumbar. The Velvikudi grant informs us that Jatila Parantaka defeated Ay Vel ruler who headed the Kurumbar at a place *Nattukkurumbu* (Sanskritic Sources of Travancore History. Unpublished dissertation by K. Maheswaran Nair, Director of Arhaeology, Trivandrum).

village Sheramahadevi in Tirunelvelly.[2] This shows that he was on friendly relations with the Cheras. Rajasimha III (900—920) is credited with the victory of Vanchi. This Pandyan King defeated by Parantaka Chola I, finally stayed at Kerala in the home of his mother. But his successor Vira Pandya having been defeated by Sundara Chola and Sundara Cholas's son killed Vira Pandya and the Pandyan kingdom came under the direct rule of the Chola empire. This in brief was the relation of the Pandyas with the Kerala.

The Chalukyas of Vatapi

The Chalukyas of Vatapi (543—755) about whom we have very little knowledge due to the paucity of historical evidence seem to have made some depredations into Kerala as can be gathered from some of their inscriptions. Pulakesin I (543—566) otherwise known as 'one endowed with the strength of a lion' in his wave of conquest to establish an enduring kingdom overwhelmed Kerala and established his sway. The Mahakuta inscription of Mangalesa lays down that Pulakesin's son Kirttivarman expanded the kingdom by the conquest of Kerala and Mushaka. The Aihole inscription discovered in the Maguti temple in Bijapur district in Karnataka written in chaste Sanskrit which gives an impressive array of the military conquests and achievements of Pulakesin II record his crossing of the Kaveri and causing 'great prosperity to the Cholas, Keralas and Pandyas'. But Pulakesin failed in his ultimate objective of overthrowing the Pallava power and Narsimhavarman, the Pallava invaded the

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2. Sermahadevi is properly Cheran-Maha-devi that is temple of Maha-devi, that is Parvathi worshipped by Cheran, the king of Kerala P Shangoonny Menon's History of Travancore states that the king of Chera occasionally resided there "In Chera-Maha-Devi, Thencasi, Kalaccad thrikanankudy, Valliyoor and etc., the Travancore Rajahs resided upto the seventeenth century, a fact celarly proved by documents and inscriptions" (page 34) According to him Chera Udaya Marthanda Varma (1382—1444) "often resided at Valliyoor and Cheran-Maha-Devi" and "was his favourite residence and consequently this sovereign was called Chera Udaya Marthanda Varmah Towards the close of his reign, suspecting unfair proceedings on the part of the chief men of the Pandyan State, the residence of the royal family was removed to Elayadathunad Kottarakaray and a Governor was appointed to rule Valliyoor and other possessions in the east" (ibid p. 95)

Chalukyan territory and Pulakesin died fighting in 642. An interregnum followed and it lasted from A. D. 642 to 655 when Vikramditya I, the third son of Pulakesin II inflicted a crushing defeat on the Pallava s confederate forces. Vikramaditya's son, Vinayaditya (681 – 696) revived his father's military exploits and defeated among others the king of Kerala in the South and made him pay tribute thus recovering the lost prestige, power and kingdom. Vinayaditya s grandson Vikramaditya II (733 – 74) repeated his invasion of Kerala and the copper plates of his successor Kirtivarman II described how Vikramditya II restored heaps of gold and rubies which had been taken away from them from the temple of Siva at Adur in Kasaragod. But Kirtivarman II and his Ganga ally were defeated in the battle at Vemban by the Pandyan monarch Maravarma Rajasimha I, and thus ended the Chalukyan dominion over Kerala. The tradition of rock-cut (cave) architecture in the South Indian temples owe their origin to the Chalukyan artistic practice.

The Pallavas of Kanchi : With the uprooting of the Kalabhras, the Pallavas emerged as a new political force with their capital at Kanchipuram. Simhavishnu also known as Avanisimha, Chatrumalla etc referred in the Velurpalayam plates (Circa 600) and in the *Mattavilasa Prahasanam* who was the first among the Pallavas of Kanchi to set afoot on the southern extension of his kingdom is said to have defeated the Kerala king and claimed sovereignty. The kingdom of his successor, Mahendra Varman II (600 – 630) (known by the notorious title of *Kalahapriya* and the author of *Mattavilasa Prahasanam* and *Bhagavatajjukiyam)* comprised the eastern Andhra and the Coramandel coasts from the Krishna in the North to the Kaveri in the South. Narasimhavarman I (630 – 668) who succeeded in defeating the Cheras and the Pandyan king Sendan and undertook two naval expeditions against Ceylon as can be gathered from the narrations in the *Mahavamsa* of Ceylon. Nandi Varman II (731 – 769) otherwise known as Pallavamalla joined hands with the chieftains of Kerala in the historic fight against the Pandyan contemporary Varaguna I. Kerala or part of it was under the Pallavas during the reign of Nandivarman III (847 – 869) as well. The Tamil work *Nandikalambakam* refers to this when it mentions Nandivarman as *Kavirivalanandan*

and *Kumarikongan* (King of the Kaveri region, Kumari and Kongu). The work gives him mastery over the Chera country as well. The Sinnamanur plates of the Pandyan king Srimara Srivallabha refers to the decline of his valour at the closing years of his reign. On the death of Nandivarman III differences developed between his sons Nripatunga and his half-brother Aparajita and they tried to win over the support from different quarters. The Pandyas supported Nripatunga while the Gangas and the Cholas helped Aparajita. The Chola king Aditya stood with Aparajita while Varaguna II, the Pandya and Prithvipathi I, the Ganga allied themselves with Nripatunga The two confederate forces met in battle at Tiruppurabhiyam (Srippurambiyam) near Kumbakonam[3]. In this battle the Ganga chief was killed, the Pandya was defeated and the ruling Pallava was no more heard of. Aparajita secured the Pallava throne with the help of the Chola. But tides turned and the Chola utilised the opportunity to proceed against his Pallava overlord and defeated him and the Pandyas retreated and the Pallavas exterminated. This battle paved the way for founding the Chola hegemony.

The period following the Kalabhras was marked by confusion under changed political circumstances and Kerala like the rest of Tamilakom also became a veritable cockpit of warring powers. During the early Pandya and Chola periods the southern portion of Kerala called Nanjinadu, together with Purattayanadu, the region in which Cape Comorin was included, appear to have belonged to the Pandya kingdom. At a subsequent period, during the decay of the Pandyas, this state of things was reversed and the southern portion of Tinnevelly seems to have been included in Kerala then known by the generic term Kudanadu, a synonym for Kerala in general. Each of these changes rests on the evidence of inscriptions but in neither case is there any trace or tradition of the change having effected by force of arms. The weaker for the time being, seems to have quietly given way to the stronger. With the spread of the Vijayanagar empire into the Tamil country the Pallavas along

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3. We have already alluded to one Kurumbar Adityan, an unknown Kerala king who stood steadfastly with Aparajitha as revealed from the inscription in the Mathengeswara temple at Sathyaveedu.

with the other native powers did for the time disappear from the body politic of South India.

The Rashtrakutas

The Rashtrakutas under Dantidurga (753) who overthrew the rule of the Chalukyas of Vatapi embarked on a territorial expansion by making inroads into the South beyond the borders of Karnataka also claim hegemony over Kerala. Govinda III (792—814) crumbled the confederacy of minor rulers from the far south including the Pallava, Pandya, Kerala and Ganga rulers who resisted him. It is said that from Kanauj to Kumari and from Banares to Broach his writ ran, and the Ceylon ruler frightened by his military prowess and aggressiveness volunteered to submit to him.

Like the rest of Tamilakom the political imbroglio that prevailed in Kerala during a period of three centuries succeeding the Sangam age might have resulted in the Chera country or the eastern and northern parts of it to come under Pandya or Chola hegemony while isolated parts like the land of the Ays perhaps remained independent due to relatively inaccessible location.

Impact of Chola and Pallava occupation

The impact of Chola and Pallava occupation of Kerala on the replication of architecture and performing arts of Kerala needs greater attention by the researchers of ancient Kerala history. The conspicuous features of a Kerala temple are (a) *tala chanda* (elevational profile) consisting of the *sukanasa* and *mukhamandapa* and *sikhara* — the basal platform, *Sandhara* or *nirandara* — the interior decor the *pranala* — wall with its cordonal openings or false doors, *upapita*, external and auxillary forms like the *Gopura dvara* -- cloister unit, *namaskara mandapa; natamandapa* (koothambalam) *dhvajasthamba, balipita*.

Kerala temples are conditioned by the zone of location, regional affiliation, the raw material and the climatic factors. The cave temples of Kerala while adopting the quintessentials of Pandyan architecture revealed their distinctness in orientation, art motifs, pillar structure and iconographic representation. Least deviation from the conventional forms was a feature which

motivated a complete mastery of craftsmen on natural media such as rock, laterite and timber. The grandeur and the excellence of Chola architecture and sculpture as found in some old Kerala temples is indicative of the Chola hegemony over Kerala in those remote days. The bronze work in Kerala is a heavy imitation of that which flourished in the kingdom of Cholas. But stone carvings find very little prominence in the Kerala temples that can be compared with the Tamil masterpieces of Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram. The close resemblance of the classical Indian painting historically associated with the Guptas borrowed to a very great extent by the Pallavas is still depicted on the walls of the rock hewn eight century Siva temple at Tirunandikkara (formerly in the erstwhile Travancore till 1956). The murals at Tirunandikara is perhaps the sole surviving of the Pallava form of architecture[4]. The idols of the deities in this temple bear a marked similarity to those of Ajanta. The efflorescence of the Ajanta art radiated in its art impulse to Vatapi during the regime of Chalukyas and handed down to Pallavas and thereafter to the Pandyas might have crossed the Ghats and hence the mural tradition discernible in full blown grace of Ajanta figuration in the walls of this Siva rock-cut temple. Some specimens of 9th century rock-cut temples, Jain and Saivite are found at Kallil, Chitaral, Irunnalakode, Trikkur, and Kaviyur. The style of work reflects Pallava-Pandya influence. They possess the cave pillars and relief sculptures of a supreme type. The rock-cut architectural style, the pillar m a n d a p a which is seen in Kerala temples is a special feature of the Mahendra style of structure. The roofing technique adapted to withstand the fury of rains and strong winds of the West Coast, alone perhaps differentiate them from similar buildings of the Chola empire. The proposition of Stella Kramrisch that Kerala type of temple is of indigenous origin is apt to confuse. The sculptural techniques inside the temples

4. From Mandagappattu record (Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XV, pp. 14—17 South Indian Inscriptions XII No. 12) it is seen that even in the time of Mahendra Pallava, he has to own till then, structures to gods made of brick, wood, metal and stucco. Such was the case of *Koil* or the mansions of gods till about 600 A. D. Further the early Pallava records of Tamilnad of *Prakrts and the Apabhramsas* of Sanskrit bespeak a linguistic break with the past geographically and politically.

to a very large extent leaned heavily upon the Pandyan or Chola contemporary techniques. The *dwarapalakas* at Kaviyur and Vizhinjam, the Dakshinamurthi at Irunnalakode, the dancing scenes pictured on the sopana at Trikkudithanam and Tirukkulasekharapuram amply testify to the above conclusion. The Kerala idom with its own rounded faces and features, heavy ornaments and slightly dwarfish figures expressed more in wood than in stone is a later development.

Kerala emerged from the historical night at the beginning of the 9th century with Kulasekharas ruling with their capital at Mahodayapuram having under their suzerainty the whole of present Kerala with the exception of the Ay-kingdom in the South and the area around Cape Comorin held by the Pandyas. Nothing definite could be stated with regard to the origin of the Kulasekharas whether they are decendents of the old Cheras or aliens who came from across the sea in the dark centuries.

XI POST SANGAM PERIOD

The Ays

Close on the chronological vaccum that followed the early Sangam age we come across the Ays only towards the end of the 7th century from the inscriptions of the Pandyan kings. A reconstruction of the genealogy of the Ay dynasty is possible from the inscriptions of the Pandyan kings after the end of the 8th century. The Pandyas became a formidable power in South India. The Pandyas were engaged in a number of attempts upto the end of the 8th century to conquer the Ay kingdom. Arikesari (670—700 A.D.) (The Pandyas—Sethuraman)—The contemporary of Tirujanasambandhar invaded the Ay kingdom. He attacked the fortified town of Kottar. Nakkirar in his commentary on the *Iraiyanar Akapporul* praises the achievement of Arikesari "in defeating the ocean like army of the Ay kingdom. Arikesari's son Ko—Chadaiyan defeated the Ay king in the battle of Maruthur near Amba Samudram in Tinnevelly district. Obviously the Ay kingdom embraced certain parts of Tinnevelly

1. T. A. S. Vol. III and VI. Also there is reference in *Unniyachi Charitham.* "Dharani Vallabha Kshoni Bhando" occurring in Bhringa Sandesa" is deemed to refer to this place.

district also during this period. After the battle of Maruthur the Ay kings might have temporarily accepted the paramountcy of the Pandyas as Ko—Chadaiyan's son Rajasimha is referred in these inscriptions as the master of the Chera kingdom. But his son Maran Chadaiyan invaded Ay kingdom many times.

Chadaiyan and Karunantan

The Madras Museum grant of the 17th regnal year of Maran Chadaiyan gives details of these military exploits. According to these inscriptions Maran Chadaiyan took possession of Vizhinjam which was a highly fortified town and the capital of the Ay kingdom. But the conquest of Vizhinjam does not seem to have been final as we have evidence in the Trivandrum stone inscription that the king was still fighting in the vicinity of Vizhinjam, more than 10 years after his 1st invasion.[2] The Kazhugumalai inscription of the 23rd year of Maran Chadaiyan's reign records his invasion against the king of Malainadu and the destruction of Ariviyur. Ariviyur is identified with Aruvikkara in Thiruvattar.[3] By that time Chadaiyan had died and Karunantan became king in the Ay kingdom. A big army under Maran Chadaiyan defeated the Chera army at Vizhinjam; but when the Pandyas retired to Karaikottai.[4] the Chera army followed them and killed many Pandyan soldiers. As the inscriptions refer to the Ay army as Chera army it seems that by the time the Cheras had become very powerful and helped the Ays to drive away the Pandyas. In the battle of Karaikottai, Rana Kirthi the great confident of Maran Chadayan died. After the battle of Karaikottai the Pandyas desisted from invading the Ay kingdom, probably because the Ays were during this time under the protection of Kulasekhara Alwar and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar.

Later Ay Kings

The above events took place towards the close of the 8th century. The period of the reign of Karunantan is not known. The Paliyam Plates of Varaguna make mention of a king

2. The Pandyan kingdom, K. A. Nilakanta Sastry, p. 64.
3. Chila Kerala Charithra Prasnangal. Part I. Elamkulam.P. 10
4. Karaikodu near Talakulam.

Karunantaruman. Some historian hold that Karunantaruman reigned in between Karunantan and Karunantadakkan[5]. It was during his rule, that another Pandyan king Sri Vallabha (815—862) again conquered Vizhinjam. Karunantaruman had a place at Katalamkulam.

Karunantadakkan

Karunantadakkan was an important ruler of the Ay dynasty about whom inscriptional evidence is forthcoming. T.A. Gopinatha Rao is of the view that he ascended the throne in 855[6] while Robert Sewell fixed the date of his accession as June 23, 858[7]. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai places the accession of Karunantadakkan on June 27, 857 on the basis of the installation of the deity in the Parthivapuram temple referred in the Huzur Office Plates.

No definite inscriptional evidence exists on the real extent of his kingdom. Some authors conclude that the boundary between the Ay kingdom and Venad lay north of Trippappur, eight miles north of Trivandrum. The southern boundary of Karunandadakkan was only upto the north of Nagercoil.[8] It is

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5 *Chila Kerala Chanthra Prasnangal*, Part I Opp cit, p. 112–113

6 T A. S. Vol I, Opp cit. p.3

7 South Indian Inscriptions, p 36

8 The hypothesis of Prof. Elamkulam that the Ay Kings used to hold the names Sri Vallabha as was often done by the Gangas, the Cholas and the Pandyas is disputed by Prof M G S Narayanan on the ground that not only Sri Vallabha but Varaguna also was a title Prof Elamkulam suggested that 28th December 925 would suit the astronomical data found in the Paliyam Plates Prof M. G. S Narayanan questions Prof Elamkulam's reading and fixed the date of this date of the documents of the 15th regnal year of the Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna as the 28th of December 898 A D. which would suit both the astronomical details and the historical evidence This would give us the period from 883 A D. to 911 A. D. for the Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna and show that he came to the throne in the closing years of the Pandyan king Varaguna II (862 A D -885 A D) and thus assumed his overlord's name as his own second name as a mark of submission "

The construction of Ay chronology in the 9th century attempted by Narayanan shows the subservience of the Ays to the Pandyas. While explaining his interpretation he remarks that the Ays like the Vels in the Chera kingdom had a "hereditary monarchy and retained some autonomy and independence – vide issue of grants in their own regnal years as in the case of Parthivapuram and the Paliyam Copper Plates (Reinterpretations in South Indian History, Opp. cit p. 32).

conjectured that Tiruvattar and Vizhinjam were the capitals of the Ay kings in different periods after the Ays left *Podiyil* hill in the 5th or 6th century.[9] In Puram 396, it is laid down that Tiruvattar was the capital for some time. In the Paliyam Copper Plate Grant, Vizhinjam is stated as the capital. So we are led to believe that during the time of Karunandadakkan Vizhinjam was the capital of the Ay kings. Further Vizhinjam had been the main target of attack by the Pandyas in different periods. Also the inscriptions refer to the place as *Kula Vizhinjam* or the *Kulapuri* or the chief city.

The construction of the temple at Parthivapuram and the installation of the deity are attributed to Karunandadakkan.[10] The old name of Parthivapuram was Uzhaikkudivilai. From Huzur Office Plates we learn that Karunandadakkan bought the land for the temple from the Munchirai Temple Ooralar Sabha by giving them an equal extent of paddy field. It was he who named the place as Parthivasekharapuram which in course of time became Parthivapuram. There was a *Salai* or Vedic school attached to the temple where provision was made for 95 Brahmin scholars *(sattars)* to stay and learn. There is a section of historians who attribute the founding of the famous Kandalur Salai also to Karunandadakkan. **Vikramaditya Varaguna.**

Vikramaditya Varaguna was the successor of Karunandadakkan. Vikramaditya was probably the title which is referred to in the Huzur Copper Plates and the inscriptions at Tirucchanam.[11] On the basis of the Paliyam inscription of Varaguna's 28th regnal year, Elamkulam assigns the period from 885 to 925, and according to another interpretation between the years 883 and 911.[12]

9. Pliny and Ptolemy mention Kottar or Kottiara as an outstanding trading centre in the Kingdom of Ays.

10. T. A. S. Vol. I, p. 3.

11. *It is believed that Varaguna without the title of Vikramaditya figuring in the* Paliyam grant was also this King. The Parthivapuram grant of 866 A. D. refer to Chendi *(Aykula Mathevi)* the daughter of Chathan Murukan as the wife of Varaguna. This also strengthens the above conclusion

12. See Foot Note 28 supra. For detailed study of the Paliyam grant made by L.D. Swamikkannu Pillai, K. V. Subramania Iyer, T. A. Gopinatha Rao and others. See *Chila Kerala Charithraprasnangal*, Part III, pp. 94 to 104 and *Reinterpretations in South Indian History*, M. G. S. Narayanan, 1977 Trivandrum, pp. 24 to 32.

The conspicuous feature of the period was the contest for supremacy between the Pandyas and Cholas in the South. Early in the 10th century A.D. the Pandyan king Maravarman Rajasimha II (900—920) was defeated by Paranthaka Chola (907—955) and the Pandyan kingdom was annexed to the Chola empire. Nanchinad also came under the Chola rule. Rajasimha had to flee to Ceylon. After staying there for some time, he sought asylum in Kerala, the home of his mother.

The inscriptions of Rajasimha Pandya are found in Nanchinad upto the second decade of the 10th century. The inscriptions of Parantaka belonging to the third decade of the 10th century are profuse in Suchindram and places surrounding Nanchinad. Probably by this time the Pandyan capital Madurai might have been annexed by the Cholas and the Pandyas retreated towards Nanchinad. In the encounters that ensued, Varaguna would have aligned himself with the Pandyas. The Paliyam grant presumably refers to the division of the rest of his kingdom to temples like Sreemolayatham or Sreemolavasam after his defeat at the hands of Cholas.[13] The passage: 'The God of Death, terrible with open mouth is roaming near, awaiting his time and as if to show him favour, his father, the Lord of Day,[14] hurries away in rapid marches the remainder of your lives' is significant in that Varaguna apprehending extinction of his reign fled to the capital of the Cheras and entrusted the responsibility of the administration of his residual kingdom to the powerful king Virakotha, the heir apparent of the Chera dynasty of the time. Virakotha is identified with Indukotha of the Chera dynasty. The very fact that the grant was executed at Paliyam near North Parur and that the limits of the Chera kingdom reached a few miles north of Trivandrum in the 10th century reinforces this

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13. This refers to the accredited title of the Cholas as belonging to the solar dynasty

14 M. G. S. Narayanan is of the view that this would have been impossible in the context of the Chera—Pandya contest for supremacy in the Ay-Vel region. The Shinnamannar Plates refers to the marriage of Chera princess, Vanavan Mahadevi to the Pandyan king Parantaka Viranarayanan (885—905 A.D.) This matrimonial alliance was based on the entente cordiale Opp. cited, p.32.

contention. Further in the many 10th century inscriptions of the Cholas record the events of Chola occupation such as the sacking of Kandalur Salai and Vizhinjam from the hands of the Cheras. In the 12th century A.D. a branch of the Ay dynasty which had established its headquarters at Trippappur, 10 miles to the north of Trivandrum and exercising authority over the Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple, the seat of the tutelary deity of the Ays merged with the Kizhperur royal house which had been ruling over Venad.

Social and other conditions in the Ay kingdom

The numerous inscriptions pertaining to the Ay kingdom during the periods of Karunandadakkan and Varaguna provide interesting insight into the administration of the kingdom and the religious, social and cultural conditions during the 9th and 10th centuries in Kerala. The kingdom was divided into a number of Nadus. There was a *kizhava* for each Nadu The *kizhava* carried out the instructions of the king regarding the governance of the area. Some of the records of these periods point to the matrimonial alliances of the Ay kings with some of the *kizhava* families. The Huzur office Plates of Karunandadakkan inform us that one of the king's officers was Sattan Murugan, Kizhavan of Tenganadu which was one of the nads of the Ay kingdom and that Varaguna married the daughter of this kizhavan.[15] The Nadu was further divided into . Desoms. terms *Ur, Mangalam, Kulam, Kode, Kara* etc., also denote *desom.* The

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15 T. A. S. Vol. I, p. 2, The term ***kizhar*** found in the later inscriptions of the 11th century and in the ***Unniyachi Charitham*** of the 13th century is equated with ***kizhavan*** by some historians. ***Kizhavan*** used in a sense of a subordinate king is found in ***Purananuru*** (155) also According to Noboru Karashima the word ***kizhavan (kilavan)*** referred to in the transactions made in the Sembiyangurrur inscription S. I. I., Vol. VIII, No. 337 derives from ***Kilamai***, most probably implying the possessor or holder of land in the village (South Indian History and Society, 1984 O. U. P., p 18. When preceded by a village name, it meant a prominent land holder of that village viz. Udaiyan ***Kilavan*** was the title of landholder who was an influential persons in the locality. ***Kilavan*** of Anapaya—Chathurveedi mangalam, Kodumballur, Kanattur (vide Chola inscriptions No 448, 536, 537 of the Vedaranyam temple)

functions carried out at these levels have been subjected to serious discussion by modern researchers. Whether it is a delineation of the power of the state at the local level is a moot point. It is argued that there was little scope for such institutions to act as effective units of local government invested with administrative functions by devolution or decentralization of the monarchical state. No evidence is there that the urs or *Nadus* were constituted by the state for administrative purposes "The village communities were each an organism born out of its consciousness of its members of a kingship among them"[16]. Mahalingam's view of these village communities, "adapting themselves to changing conditions in the country" is without foundation according to modern researchers who disagree on the existence of the local society as "congeries of self—governing villages". According to them the Nadu represented an ethnic and ecological unit..."essentially it was a residential site for peasant family and their various service groups with easy access to fields served by local irrigation system.[17]

Important kings and noblemen contributed liberal grants to temples and educational institutions *(Salais)*. Such grants were inscribed either on stones or copper plates. The grants mentioned only the year of the king's reign and seldom the *Kali* day[18] (Parthivapuram grant of Karunandadakkan). The Paliyam Copper Plates record the gift of land by the Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna to the Buddhist *Vihara* of Tirumulapadam. The Huzur Office Plates testify the establishment of a *Salai* at Parthivasekhavapuram by Karunandadakkan. The Chitaral inscription of the 28th regnal year of Vikramaditya Varaguna records the gift of gold to the temple of Tiruchanattumala by a private donor.[19] The Tiruvithaikodu inscription of Karunanda-dakkan records the gift of 25 cows by a philanthropist for maintaining a perpetual lamp in the Siva temple of the locality[20]

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16 T V Mahalingam, South Indian Polity, Madras, pp 161—62

17 The state and Agrarian Order - Essays on South India, Opp. cit. p. 72

18 The Kali era with its epoch around 383 A. D. as seen from the Gommateswara record of Sravanabelgola is supposed to have been introduced by the Kalabhras who were hostile to Vedic Brahmanism in the South and were patronising Jainism to a very great extent

19 T A. S. Vol. I, p 193

20 T A. S. Vol. I, p. 14.

The Ay kings in their military centres *(Kalaris)* attached to the Parthivapuram and Kandalur Salais imparted training in the use of arms. These institutions reverberated with the Asan's Vaykuri or Military Instructors oral instructions which every cadet had to repeat and the accompanying movements and clashing of arms. 'Kill or die' became the motto of every warrior. Instructors were brought to these centres from Madurai and Ceylon. The Tirupparappu[21] Copper Plate Inscription records that it was engraved by one Aviyalanradakkan of Vizhinjam who bore the title of Sri Vallabha Perumbanaivan and was the manufacturer of arms, to the king Karunandakakkan. The kings and other chieftains at the time folowed the patrilineal system of succession. The common punishment for crime was fine. The Huzur Office Plates record the levy of a specified quantity of gold as punishment for each crime. The fines collected were paid either to temples or to the state. The coins were used, the most important among them were *kasu, Ezhakasu, Karumkasu, Pazhamkasu* and the *dinar*. The grants to the temple were administered by the *Sabha* which was a Board of Trustees. It was from one such Sabha at Munchira that Karunandadakkan purchased the plot of land called Uzhakudivila to construct the temple at Parthivapuram. The temple Sabha elected a small executive known as *Variyam* who conducted the rites and ceremonies associated with the temple.

The *Salais* attached to temples played a prominent role in the cultural life of the people. The Sri Vallabha Perumchalai of Kanyakumari, the Parthivasekharapuram Salai and the Kanthalur Salai were famous among such institutions. These institutions served as great residential colleges and provided facilities for the study of religious literature and secular subjects. The Srivallabha Perumchalai of Kanyakumari was not exclusively confined to the study of Vedic literature. The Copper Plate registering the establishment of the Salai at Parthivasekharapuram on the model of the one at Kanthalur suggests that *Sattar* were highly learned scholars. The *Salai* was established for 95 *Sattars*. The inscription clearly records that the *Sattar* there, were highly proficient in at least three branches of learning viz.

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21 T A S Vol I, p. 198.

Mimamsa (logic), *Vyakarana* (grammar), and *Paurohitva* (domestic ritual) in addition to the *Veda* and vested with the management of the entire properties of not only the *salabhoga* (tax—free land endowed to a *Salai*) but also the *devadana* of the temple attached to the *Salai*. The *Sattar* are to be regarded as teachers placed in charge of the institution rather than mere students. The inscription further states that they should not keep *Vellattikal* (maid servants) in the *matha*. This rejoinder clearly points that the *Sattar* were living in the *matha*.[22] attached to the *Salai*. The *Amarakosa* lays down a matha as an abode for the chatras and others'(*mathaschatradi nilayah*). According to Subramanian "Satta was an internal *brahmachari* wedded to life long study and teaching with no other worldly attachment"[23]. The *matha* or *matta* seems to have been an important institution of learning at that remote period with a large number of scholars as its members. The great Advaitha philosopher Sankara is said to have founded a *matha* at Kanchi, he himself designating the centre as *Kamakoti Pita*.

According to the Copper Plate Grant of Karunandakakkan, the distribution of seats among the members of the *Salai* were as follows. 45 *kalams* to the members of the *Pavizhiya charana* 35 to the members of the *Taittriva charana* and 14 to the *Talavakara charana*[24] The qualifications and the disciplinary

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22 The earliest reference to a *matha* in South India is in the inscription of Dantivarma I which speaks of a *matha* attached to the Siva temple Tirunevali at Kanchi. C. Minakshi is of the view that it was this *matha* that inspired Appar to glorify Kanchi (Administration and Social Life under the Pallavans P 208. Also an inscription from Kaverippakkam dated in the 25th year of Nrupatungavarman (Circa 866 A. D.) refers to *madattu cattaperumakkal* who were entrusted with the endowment in the temple (South Indian Inscriptions XII No. 79. See also another inscription of the 10th century A. D. (678 of 1962 63) The *matha* was a typical Indian monastery with monks, ascetics and students living within the precincts. These monasteries were invariably attached to some local temple or had some temples attached to them (Moraes, The Kadamba Kula, p. 14) In ancient and medieval South India education was promoted mainly by institutions like the *Ghatika*, *Matha*, *Agrahara* and *Salai*. They provided facilities for the study of religious literature and secular subjects

23 South Indian Temple Inscriptions, Vol. III, part ii, p 7

24. *Kalam* means seat or membership of share of each for provision of food.

rules[25] prescribed for the *sattar* suggest that the *Salai* was not an ordinary institute of learning but a centre of higher education. There were lecturers *(makkal)* and veteran professors *(Perumakkal)*. The reference to *Padaikalam* (prohibition to attend the assembly with weapons of warfare) and punishment for fighting within the temple lead to the conclusion that the inmates were imparted training in military weapons [26]. The citation in the grant that the *sattar* should be sufficiently proficient in

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25. A *cattar* should not speak abusingly of another *cattar* within the precincts of the temple *(mukkal vattam)*; otherwise he should eat in the *Salai* only after paying a fine of 5 *kanam* of gold to the *perumaakkal* (here *perumakal* denotes the elderly professors). (2) If a *cattar strikes or is struck by another, he must pay a fine of one kasu* and *kanam* of gold respectively. (3) He should not go to the assembly armed with the weapons of warfare *(padaikkalam)* (4) Making wound with a weapon was not considered as an act of *dharma* or *aram* (5) He should not practise any kind of deceit. (6) He should not fight within the temple· otherwise he would lose a day's meals *(kalam)*. (7) He should not alienate the lands of the *salabhoga* and the *devadana*; otherwise he should pay a fine of 5 *kalanju* of gold (8) He should not appoint any maid servants in the *matha* in which he was residing. S. Gurumurthy. Education in South India (Ancient medieval Periods) pp. 61–62 All the seats were distributed to Pavizhiya school based on Rig Veda, Taittariya on Yajus and Talavakara on sama veda obtainable among the Nambudiris (p 273, Studies in Kerala History). The speculation of Elamkulam that in course of time it became a great military training centre for preparing Nambudiri generals to lead the Chera army does not seem to be correct in view of the fact that the learned who were supported at the *Salais* in the period before Rajaraja may or may not have been Brahmins. That non-brahmins with a profound knowledge of Sanskrit continued to exist we know from the thirteenth century Saiva movement Also, it is not clear whether the Brahmins received the greatest favour from the Cholas. K G. Krishnan in interpreting *Kanimurruttu* occuring in Chola inscriptions say that it refers to the support of non-Brahmin servants by non-Brahmin *nattars* (p. 352, Peasant State and Society in South India, Opp cited). An inscription from Kaverippakkam dated in the 25th regnal year of Nrpatungavarma (Circa 886 A. D.) refers to certain people as *madattu catta perumakkal* who were entrusted with the endowment of the temple. The word *satta* or *catta* is derived from Sanskrit word *chatra* which is taken to mean only a student and not a Brahmin student.

26. The views of Subramoniam, (opp. cited) viz. that the *Salai* imparted instruction in martial arts and M. G. S. Narayana viz. that the *sattar* were all arms bearing Brahmana–scholars, appear to be farfetched. The restriction imposed viz. the *sattar* were permitted to use weapons only on certain occasions, refers to self-defence and not permanent arms bearing. (See Education in South India, S. Gurumurthy, Madras 1979 for a detailed discussion. p. 62–63)

Trairaiya Vyavahara refers to the then conditions of the three kingdoms of the Chera, the Chola and the Pandyas.

The Kanthalur Salai was par excellence the outstanding model centre of higher learning under the Ays. Desikavinayakam Pillai is of the opinion that it was the Nalanda of the South and that it was looked upon as a model by the people of that time[27]. That Kanthalur was a renowned centre of higher studies is testified by reference to it in the Sendalai Pillar Inscription of Muttaraiyar[28] and in the Copper Plate grant of Karunandakakkan cited above and in the *Anantapuravarnanam* in Malayalam[29] a a work of the 14th century. The exact location of the place is still a matter of contention. There are two opinions, one holding that it was near Vizhinjam in Neyyattinkara taluk and the other that it was at Trivandrum itself. *Anantapuravarnanam* speaks of Chala-Valiasala area in Trivandrum as Kandalur Sala. Also in the Trivandrum temple records of 1424 Kanthalur Sala is mentioned. In many documents of the 16th and 17th century Valiasala temple is mentioned as Kanthalur Salai Mahadevar Koil. The names Chalai and Valiasalai purport the existence of educational institutions in those places. But there is no definite epigraphical or other historical evidence to prove that Kanthalur *Salai* was situated in between the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple and the Valiasala temple. Another fact is that no mention is made in any literary or other works locating Trivandrum with Kanthalur But there are ample literary and inscriptional evidences linking Kanthalur *Salai* with the Mahadevar temple, in the Kulathur village of the Neyyattinkara taluk. In Kalingattupparani verse 370 there is mention of the capture of a *Salai* near Vizhinjam and some historians have tried to identify this place with Kanthalur. But this interpretation is not supported by the earliest references of Kanthalur and Gopinatha Rao[30] has identified Kanthalur with Valiasalai. A further suggestion was that Kanthalur lay near Poovar in Neyyattinkara[31]. It is better

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27 Kerala Society Papers, Series II, p. 103.

28 Epigraphia Indica XIII, No. 10, p. 146.

29 The dexterity of the scholars of the *Salai* in the employment of arms of warfare is poetically exaggerated in this work

30. T. A. S. Vol. I, p. 6.

31 See Archaeological Report, 1920–21, p. 65.

to accept Kanthalur *Salai* and Vallasalai as identical in the midst of the gloss of interpretations.

The inscriptional phrase '*Kandalur Salai Kalam aruttu*' forms one of the oldest historical puzzles of the Chola period in South Indian History. The phrase has been variously translated as '*Kandalur salai kalam aruttu aruliya*; or merely *Kandalur Salai Kalam aruttu* or even merely *salai kalam aruthu aruliya*. This eulogistic preamble regarding Rajaraja who launched his first military campaign into Southern Kerala during the third year of his reign is seen engraved in many of his subsequent inscriptions and till he assumed the title of *Mummudi Chola Dovar* (the Chola overlord of the three kingdoms). But it is pertinent to note that this title figures in the inscriptions of his successors Rajendra I, Rajadhiraja I, Kulottunga I and the Pandyan king Jatavarman Parantaka.

The phrase was first translated as 'the king was pleased to build a jewel-like hall at Kandalur'[32]. Another interepretation of the phrase which appeared subsequently was "he was pleased to destroy the ships at the roadstead or port of Kandalur" [3]. A third suggestion refers to the feeding house at Kandalur and held that the king discontinued the feeding in the feeding house at Kandalur.[34] Yet another explanation was that the "scale of

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32. South Indian Inscriptions Vol I p 65 where Hultzsch provide the reading Gopinatha Rao, T A S. Vol I, pp 2, 10, S Desikavinayakam Pillai, Kerala Society Papers series 2 p 100 and The Colas K A Nilakanta Sastri, p 190 n 7

33 South Indian Inscriptions, Opp cited, p. 241, 250, K A Nilakanta Sastri, Opp. cit. p. 190, K V Subramonia Iyer, A. S Ramanathan etc The conventional interpretation of the word '*Salai*' is as 'port' or road stead The more common meaning is a hall or institution of learning (patta sala) or charitable institution The conventional meaning is circumscribed within the corpus of Chola inscriptions while the meaning adopted by Hultzsch Gopinatha Rao and more recently by Subramonian and Guruswamy appear to be linguistically sound

34 T A. Gopinatha Rao, T. A. S Vol II, pp. 3 4, Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai observes as follows The phrase denotes the stoppage of *Kalams* at Kandalur *Salai*. It means the destruction of the military training centre at Kandalur where thousands of *Kalams* were established during the Chera-Chola war It must be remembered that this happened only during the period of war when Kandalur became a great military centre.

feeding in the feeding house at Kandalur was regulated by the king.[35] Another exposition by K. K. Pillai is that Kandalur was an Institute of learning where free food was provided for scholars.[36] He holds the view that *Kalamaruttu* does not refer to the destruction of a place but the provision for feeding of a fixed number of persons. He further argues that *kalam* stands for *Unkalam*, figuratively plates and really the amount of rice for feeding an allotted number of Brahmin scholars. According to him a reference to *Ayirattenmar* in one of the Pandyan inscriptions would mean the permanent members of that Institute of learning. Many instances are quoted by him in which Kalam was used in the meaning of share of each for provision of food. In the *Parthiyapuram* inscription also Kalam was used to denote a seat or membership. In reconstructing the problem presented by the inscriptional phrase *Kandalur Salai Kalamaruttu* and the Huzur Office Plates, T. N. Subramanian suggests the possibility that the action of Rajarajah and his successors at Kandalur may not have been as important militarily as ideologically. He concludes that the idiom of conflicts and conquests connected with Kandalur was appropriate in the records of Raja rajah and his successors since it referred to a polemical contest between the king and the learned men of the *Salai* resulting in the defeat of the latter and their submission and subsequent co-operation with the Cholas.[37] This represents a classic example of such polemical encounters common in ancient India in which the vanquished accepted the view of the victor. Sri Sankara was one such great saint who subdued rivals in arguments and earned their support S. Gurumoorthy in citing *Tandar Salai Kalamaruttu* from the Kalingattupparani gives a new interpretation that the achievement of Raja rajah at Kandalur "may only be considered as a show of his arms or power and not a war against the members of the *Salai* who happened to cross swords with him.[38] Burton Stein speculating beyond Subramoniam and Gurumoorthy suggests that the Cholas like the Pallavas

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35. S. Desikavinayakom Pillai Kerala Society Papers Series II, P 100

36. K. K. Pillai cited in *Education in South India*, S. Gurumoorthy p 64

37. South Indian Temple Inscriptions V, p-11

38. For details see Education of South India, Opp cit, pp 63 - 66

before them, "took a strong instrumental interest in learned institutions such as the one at Kandalur in Southern Kerala. Both dynastic lines sought to make these institutions useful to the states they were creating. It may indeed have been considered a 'conquest' to win to the services of the state the skills and prestige of previously independent learned men and institutions"[39] *Shri Vallabha Perumsalai* of Kazhikkudi in Kanyakumari may also be considered as an advanced educational centre under the Ays. An inscription of the 30th regnal year of Rajadhiraja I refers to it as *Rajaraja-p-perum-chalai* indicating that it was originally established by shri Vallabha alias Karunandadakkan who founded the Parthivasekharapuram Salai and later remodelled it and renamed after Raja raja. The title bore by Karunandadakkan is believed to be in token of his submission to the then Pandya ruler [40]

Buddhist and Jaina temples

The Paliyam grant reveals the religious harmony and the spirit of toleration of the Ay kings. These kings, though they were Hindus, were munificient in endowments to Jain and Buddhist institutions. The very first stanza in the plate is in praise of the Buddha, the Sangha and the *Avalokiteswara*. In the inscription at the Tiruchanam temple, Varaguna figures as a staunch patron of Jainism. Above all one historical fact that captures the attention of a student, is that the Paliyam grant records that Jainism and Buddhism were living religions in Kerala. The Tiruchanam temple situated near Kuzhithura was a Jain temple till the 14th century. The very derivation of Tirucharanam is from its association with Jain monks. The idols viz., that of Parsvanatha, Mahavira, and Pattini proclaim this identification. The famous Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil was also a Jain temple till the 16th century.

The Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna figures as a benefactor of the renowned Jaina temple at Chitaral in the Vilavancode taluk[41] of the erstwhile Travancore State. It is interesting to

39. Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, O.U.P. 1980, pp. 348—49.

40. S. I. T. I. Opp. cited, p-13.

41. T. A. S. Vol. I, p.-193—195.

note that Vikramaditya Varaguna who is the son of Karunandadakkan the builder of the Vishnu temple at Parthivasekharapuram begins his document with invocations to Buddha (Suddhodana) Dharma and Sangha. Varaguna also procured the figure of a jaina Tirthankara carved on the walls of the Jain temple at Tiruchchanattumalai. On the side of the overhanging rock which forms the natural cave are found sculptured a number of figures of the Tirthankaras, votive images carved by visitors to this holy shrine from distant places. The place seems to have been sufficiently famous in earlier times so as to attract Jains from such distant places as Tirunarungodai in the South Arcot district, Kudavasal in the Tanjore district etc. All the votive figures have engraved below their seats brief inscriptions in archaic, Vattezhuthu script, mentioning the names etc. of the persons who got them carved there. This Jain temple was converted into a Bhagavathi temple by the beginning of the 13th century. The Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil continued to be a Jain temple till the latter half of the 16th century during which it had received donations from the Travancore King, Bhutalavira Udaya Marthanda Varman. The officiating priests of the temple bore the characteristic Jain names, *Kamalavahan Pandita* and *Gunavira Pandita*. The lands granted by Udaya Marthanda Varman are referred to as *Pallichchandams* a term applied only to lands belonging to the Jain and Buddhist temples. This temple became Hindu in its nature and worship subsequent to the reign of Udaya Marthanda Varman. Gopinatha Rao has identified six Jain images in this temple.

However the period of the later Ay rule witnessed the decline of the Buddhism and Jainism and the revival of Hinduism. The Ay kings like the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram founded new temples and patronised existing ones. The Vishnu temple at Parthivasekharapuram and the Padmanabhaswamy temple at Trivandrum received unstinted patronage at the hands of the Ay kings. But during the same period the influence of Buddhist and Jain cults co-existed peacefully with each other and with indigenous forms of religion and that the Jain and Buddhist sects were successful in winning the patronage. Hsuan Tsang in A. D. 642 noted that the

"heretical" sects of Buddhism and Jainism were in a flourishing state. The Yakshini (Jaina Godess) cult was held in high esteem and inspired popular support. During the hey-day of Chola domination Raja Rajah and other Chola rulers exempted from all dues *(Kanimurruttu)*[42] to *Pallichchanda* (Jain or Buddhist shrine) villages. It is a fact that the Aryan immigration introduced Brahmanical as well as Jain and Buddhist institutions. It must be remembered in this connection that the cult of Siva gained a prestige almost equivalent to that of Vishnu and the character of Hindu philosophy was transformed by a counter—reformation by the reforming creeds of Buddhism and Jainism. The Advaita Vedanta of Sri Sankara with its stress on monotheism owe much to the metaphysics of Buddhism. The rock-cut temples like the one at Kottukal and the *Ratha* festival are all reminiscent of the Buddhist and Jain epochs. In spite of the organized and effective opposition between 6th and 10th century A. D. by the Saiva Nayanars and Vaishnava Alwars, Buddhist and Jain temples received munificient gifts and donations from the rulers and chieftains of Kerala. One cannot for certain ignore the influence of Buddhism on the evolution of Sastha cult in Kerala.

XII THE KULASEKHARAS OF MAHODAYAPURAM

A new epoch in Kerala history dawned in the 9th century A. D. with the revival of Chera power under Kulasekhara Varman which was followed by the reign of a galaxy of kings known as Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram for about 3 centuries from A. D. 800 to 1102[1]. The period marked an all pervasive transformation in the political, social and cultural fields. It was an age of great sages and seers like Sankaracharya, Kulasekhara Alwar and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. The evolution of the Malayalam language as a distinct entity was a

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42. According to K. G. Krishnan *Kanimurruttu* grant was not for Brahmins as usually understood but for non-Brahmin teachers — Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, Op cit. p-120

1. The period is 800—1124 according to M G. S. Narayanan *The Political and Social conditions of Kerala under Kulasekhara Empire.*

striking phenomena. The period also witnessed the ascendancy of theocratic oligarchy of the Brahmins.

Kulasekhara Alwar

There is no unanimity among the scholars whether the rulers really belonged to the old lineage of the early Cheras or were members of a new family adopting and perpetuating old titles. These rulers are considered by some as fugitives from the ancient Chera capital of Vanchi which had fallen into the hands of the Pandyas who founded a new capital, called Mahodayapuram or Makotai near old harbour city of Muziris or Muciri (the modern Cranganore). It was built around the great Siva temple of Tiruvanchikulam[2] The Kulasekharas ruled over a restructured kingdom including the whole of present Kerala with the exception of the Ay kingdom and the area around Cape Comorin held by the Pandyas (?).

The founder of the dynasty was Kulasekhara Varman (800 820 A. D) who has been identified with Kulasekhara Alwar about whom there is copious reference in Vaishnavite religious works as a king of Kerala, skilled in the arts of kingship and learned in spiritual matters[3]. He was the author of the

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2 No trace of the palace at Makotai remains today. The author of the *Kokasandesa* written in the 16th century A D found the place in ruins. However it is inferred from the discovery of Sankaranarayana's commentary on *Laghubhaskariyam* of the 9th century that great halls of audience, high mansions and an observatory were part of the palace complex He also mentions the temple of Ganesa and the *Sena Mugha* (cantonment) where a bell was installed for announcing the time Sundaramoorthi Nayanar of the same period had composed a beautiful hymn in praise of the Lord of Tiruvanchikulam temple There is reference to this place in the poetics of the *Periyapurana* (12th century A D) The high tower of the city is mentioned in the Viraraghava Copper Plates, the settlements of the Jews and the Christians located near the harbour Muciri in the Jewish Copper Plates The surviving relics and records including the four major temples and several minor temples would reveal that the plan of the city conformed to the classical Karmuka type (bow shape) mentioned in text books and town planning architecture

3 The reconstruction of the age of the Kulasekharas of Makotai was first put forward by Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai. (For details see Studies in Kerala History opp cited, pp-217 – 266) M. G. S. Narayana suggests that the first king of Makotai was Saivite Rama Rajasekhara in the first half of the 9th century who was probably known as Cerman Perumal Nayanar also (Sovenir of the Indian History Congress 1976, p-29). The authenticity of both contentions has yet to be proved by more clear epigraphical and literary evidence.

Mukunda Mala in Sanskrit and the *Perumal Tirumozhi* in Tamil. The age of Kulasekhara Alwar has been a bone of contention among historians. Dr. S. Krishna Swamy Iyer assigned him to the 6th century A. D. L. D. Swamikannu Pillai calculated the date of Alwar as 767 A. D. and K. G. Sesha Iyer at 527 A.D T. A. Gopinatha Rao and A. S. Ramanatha Iyer fixed his date in the 9th century A. D.[4] Elamkulam in assigning 800 820[5] or a little earlier, contends that Kulasekhara Alwar should not be identified as the celebrated dramatist Kulasekhara Varma distinguished as the author of *Tapati Samwarana, Subhadra Dhananjaya. Vichchinnabhishekha* etc., who lived between 850--900 A. D.[6] According to him the reign of Kulasekhara Alwar had terminated before the commencement of the Kollam Era (825 A. D.) and his successor Rajasekhara (Cheraman Perumal Nayanar) must have ruled till 844 A.D (19 K.E.) the year of the accession of Sthanu Ravi. An ancient manuscript recounting the life story of the Advaitha acharya Sankara written by his

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4 T A S Vol. V. pp-104 – 114.

5 The astronomical data furnished by traditional accounts lays down the birth of Kulasekhara as follows. "Thursday/Friday. *Dasami*|*Dvadasi*. tenth/twelth day of the bright fortnight. *Punarvasu* or seventh asterism. *Masi*|*Kumbha* or February-March. cyclic year *Prabhava* correspond to A. D 767 (T. A. S Vol. II, p. 105, n 4) This date probably suits the beginning of the regnal year as propounded by Elamkulam in that Kulasekhara who was 33 years old in 800 A. D. ascended the throne

6. Dr. Kunjan Raja in 'The contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature' (P. 12) states that there is difference in the literary styles of the dramatist and the Vaishnava devotee. In the Tamil Vaishnava canon ***Nalayiraprabandham*** under the name ***Perumaltirumozhi***, Kulasekhara Alwar calls himself not only ***Kotai Kulasekhara*** or Kulasekhara of the Western country. ***Kollikkavalan*** or protector of the Kollimala or Kollinagar (kolli is a hill in Namakkal and Attoor Taluks in Salem District) and ***Kongarkon*** or king of the Kongus but also ***Kutalarkon*** and ***Kutalnayakan*** meaning king of Madura and ***Kozhikkon*** and ***Kozhiyarkon*** meaning king of the Cholas which they never had been, were conferred on Kulasekhara as interpolatiously the honorific ***Nathamum*** who compiled the ***Nalayiraprabandha*** from ***Perumalthirumozhi*** in the tenth century. Some others identify the Kulasekhara who patronised the Yamaka poet Vasudeva was none other than Kulasekhara Alwar ***(Keralacharithrathile Iruladanja Edukal***, Elamkulam, p. 124). This view is not accepted by all scholars. Pending further research, we may for the timebeing accept Kulasekhara Alwar as the founder of the dynasty.

foremost disciple Padmapadacharya discovered from Thekkemadham at Trichur and the reference to "Rajasekhara, the lord of the world" by Sankara in his *Sivananda lahari*[7] prove that Sankara was a contemporary of Kulasekhara Alwar and Rajasekhara.

On the basis of available historical evidence, the history of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram may be sketched with Kulasekhara Alwar as founder.

Rajasekhara Varman (Cheraman Perumal Nayanar)

Kulasekhara Alwar was followed by Rajasekhara Varman (820 -- 844 A. D.) This Kulasekhara has been identified by some scholars with the Rajasekhara depicted in *Sankaravijava* by Madhavacharya as the royal contemporary of Sankaracharya. The Rajasekhara mentioned in Sankaracharya's *Şivanadalahari* is also considered by certain scholars as referring to this king. According to Vidyaranyan *(Sreemad Sankara Digvijayam)* the Kerala king Rajasekhara had read out to Sankaracharya three dramas *(Natakatrayi)* written by him and the latter meeting the former several years later and being informed that they had been lost, dictated the entire text from his prodigious memory. Many stories of the kind are woven round the personality of Sankaracharya as illustrative of this remarkable faculty. If however, reliance can be made on the statement of Vidyaranya we are led to believe that Rajasekhara and Sankara were contemporaries We cannot vouch for the authencity of this story as no dramas attributed to Rajasekhara have, yet been discovered Perhaps Vidyaranya might have mixed up the immortal royal dramatist Kulasekhara with Rajasekhara The word Rajasekhara in the *Tripuradahana* verse (Canto I Verse 8) does not refer to the name of the king, the word being used to bring out the similarity of the king with Siva[8] The precise date of his accession also cannot be decided on the strength of historical sources The only inscription referring to Rajasekhara is the one discovered from Vazhapalli[9].

7 The word Rajasekhara refers by virtue of double entendre to the king and Siva.
8 Nilakanta's commentary
9 T A S Vol. II, pp. 8—14. A peculiar feature of the aperture of this inscription is the insertion of the words *'Nama Sivaya'* instead of the auspicious *'Swasthi Sri'* found in the inscriptions of the time like the Badami and Karnatic Inscriptions Circa 700 750

It refers to his 12th regnal year, since it is possible from this inscription to fix the enthronement of the next Chera king Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (Sthanu Ravi) in A. D. 844. We are led to believe that Rajasekhara's reign came to an end in that year. Another possibility is that Rajasekhara might have become king before 820 as we have seen that Sankara lived during his reign. Honorific *Rajadhiraja, Parameswara, Bhattaraka*, found in the Vazhapalli inscription is cited to describe Rajasekhara as a devout and ardent *Saivite*. This Rajasekhara has been identified with the famous *Saivite* Saint Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and close associate of another outstanding *Saivite* scholar Sundaramoorthy on the basis of a story recounted in *Periyapuranam*[10]. The *Saivite* author of the *Periyapurana* described Cheraman Perumal Nayanar as having meditated in the Siva temple at Tiruvanchikulam during adolescence. He was compelled to assume the burden of kingship on his father's voluntary abdication and acceptance of asceticism. The itinerary of this king to Tiruvarur to meet Sundaramoorthy and how on reaching Tiruvarur he wrote *Mummanikkotal* in praise of *Valmikanathaswami* are very popular among *Saivites*. From Tiruvarur he went to Vedaranyam along with Sundaramoorthy after a sojourn in the Pandya country, and propitiating Lord Siva in several temples. The two friends finally reached Tiruvanchikulam where Sundaramoorthy died. His death plunged the Perumal in deep grief and he also died of broken heart. Many of his subjects are said to have committed suicide on hearing of his demise. The idols of Perumal and Sundaramoorthy have been installed at Tiruvanchikulam. A work entitled *Adi Ula* was written by him just before his death. Many Siva temples were constructed in Kerala during his reign. The famous Kandiyur temple built in 823 A. D. is attributed to him. It is said that he stayed at Chennithala during the construction of the temple as he is pictured as the sage of Chennithala in one inscription.

The reign of Rajasekhara Varma coincided with the evolution of the separate era: the *kollam Andu (Kollam Era)* in A D. 824—825.

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10. Some contend that the religious obstinacy of the author of *Periyapuranam* might have led to the total exclusion of the name of Kulasekhara Alwar who was a devout Vaishnavite being mentioned as the father of Rajasekhara (Studies in Kerala History, opp. cited, p. 221)

Sthanu Ravi Varma. (844—885)

The next king Sthanu Ravi occupies a conspicuous position in the historically outstanding Kerala manuscripts like the Tarisapalli Grant, the Tillaisthanam temple record, the Tirunandikkara inscription, Sankaranarayanan's commentary on *Laghubhaskariyam*. This most illustrious ruler of the later Cheras ascended the thrown in 844 A. D. The Tarisapalli inscription of 848 - 849 A. D. (Kollam Era 24) was written in the 5th year of Sthanu Ravi's reign. The Tarisapalli (Church of Teresa) was built with the permission of Sthanu Ravi by the priest Maruvan Sapir Iso (Mar Sapur) who reached Quilon from Nineveh in A D 823 The grant is mainly concerned with the grant and other privileges to the church by Aiyen Adigal, the ruler of Venad The Copper Plates inscriptions were executed in the presence of Vijayaragadevar[11], the *Koyil Adhikarikal* representing Sthanu Ravi The date used in the inscription is the regnal year of Sthanu Ravi Apart from the fact that this record proves that the rulers of Venad were the vassals of Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram it enables us to fix the date of Sthanu Ravi's accession[12]. The final controversy relating to the fixation of the dates of Sthanu Ravi's regnal years was settled by the discovery of Sankaranrayana's commentary on *Laghu Bhaskariyam* wherein there is an astronomical citation regarding this[13]. The Tillaistanam records show that Sthanu Ravi was a contemporary of Aditya Chola who ruled from 871 to 907. Sthanu Ravi helped the latter with an army to fight against the Pallavas. Besides there is another Copper Plate inscription dated 861 A. D. at the

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11 An inscription at Tirunandikkara (T. A S. IV, p. 144) shows that the Koyil Adhikarikal Vijayaragadevar was the son-in-law of Sthanu Ravi

12 On the basis of certain records T A. Gopinatha Rao put forward the view that Sthanu Ravi lived in the latter half of the 9th century (For details see T. A. S Vol. II)

13 Elamkulam thus lays down his discovery "A certain year in which Jupiter and Saturn were together in the House of Sagittarius is mentioned as the 25th year of Sthanu Ravi. Since Jupiter takes 12 years and Saturn 30 years to complete a journey in orbit only once in 60 years do the two planets come together in a House Between A. D. 825 and 925 these planets came together in Sagittarius only in 869 Since this is said to be the 25th regnal year of Sthanu Ravi, it follows that the ascended the throne in 844

Mecheri Illam in Thiruvalla where there is a reference to *Onam*[14]. Another lithic record of Sthanu Ravi Varma dated 855 A. D. is found in the Koodalmanickom Temple at Irinjalakuda. All the above go to prove the period of Sthanu Ravi's reign between 845 and 885 A. D.

Sthanu Ravi was a staunch Saivite like his father. From the commentary on *Laghu Bhaskariya* by Sankaranarayana we learn that Sthanu Ravi was well versed in astronomy. There was an observatory at Mahodayapuram called *Ravi Varma Yantra Valayana* where arrangements were made to notify the time for the information of the people by means of tolling of bells known as *kootu* at regular intervals of a *Ghadika* (24 minutes). The capital city was a well fortified one. Mahodayapuram became a great centre of learning and culture. The country was very prosperous. The Chinese were among the important foreign traders. This is testified by the accounts of Sulaiman, the Arab merchant who visited Kerala in 851 during the time of Sthanu Ravi. Though a Saivite, Sthanu Ravi was highly tolerant towards other religions. This is revealed by the Tarisappalli grant. We get a vivid picture of the state of the Christian community in Kerala during the period. The inscriptions tell us that 72 rights and privileges usually granted to high dignitaries were conferred on the Christians. They were exempted from import duties, sale taxes and the slave tax. According to some historians, the famous St. Thomas church at Kodungallur was established during the time of Sthanu Ravi.

Rama Varmah Kulasekhara (885–917)

Sthanu Ravi was succeeded by his son Rama Varmah Kulasekhara. He seems to be the prince Ramadeva extolled in the *Sankaranarayaneeyam* as heir apparent.[15]

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14. Perhaps this is the earliest reference to Onam inscriptions.

15. Some scholars have remarked that Sthanu Ravi was succeeded by the Vijayaragan who figures in the Tarisappalli and other inscriptions. This contention has no historical basis since the Kulasekhara's were *Makkathaus*. The description of a king called Raghupathi as Jayaragan in the *Moozhikavamsa* had led some scholars to idenify him with the, Vijayaragan of the Tarisappalli grant. Further Vijayaraga's consort was the daughter of Sthanu Ravi.

Rama Varmah was the patron of Vasudeva Bhattathiri who wrote the poems *Yudhishtira Vijaya Tripura Dahna Souri Katha* and *Nalodaya*. In the *Yudhishtira Vijaya* is mentioned a Kulasekhara with the tread of an elephant fierce in battle and solicitous of the welfare of the people as having reigned the country. The Arab traveller Masudi who glorifies the wealth of Kerala seems to have visited Kerala during this king's period.

Kothai Ravi Varmah (917–947)

Kothai Ravi Varmah was a successor of Rama Varmah Kulasekhara. In the Nedumpuram Tali temple[16] there is an inscription of this king. It was issued on the 17th year of his reign. Accordingly the year of his accession is determined as K. E. 92 (A. D. 917)[17]. The inscription of this king issued during the 30th regnal year discovered in the Santhanagoapalaswamy temple at Trippunithura informs us that his reign lasted till 947. Other inscriptions of this king are found at Avittathur, Chokkur, Triporangodu and other places and on the evidence furnished by these inscriptions, it is assumed that he must have ruled for at least thirty years. The title *manukuladitya*, occuring in Narayana's *Sithaharana* and in the inscriptions at Muzhikulam and Tiruvella,[18] has been established as a dynastic title of Kotha Ravi meaning "sun of the solar race" just as the titles of *Rajaditya* occuring in the *Nolodava* of Vasudeva Bhattathiri. The place name Manukulathichamangalam near Trivandrum refer to the founding of this village by Kotha Ravi.

The period of Kotha Ravi, otherwise known as Goda Ravi, is an important epoch in the history of South India. It was during this period that Parantaka Chola (907 955) embarked on his ambitious expansionist design, conquering Nanjanad from the Pandyan hegemony and subjugating the Ays[19] The

16 The Author of the Cochin State Manual mistook this king as one of the early kings of Cochin (Cochin State Manual, p. 39) It may be recalled here that during this period there never was the separate political entity called Cochin.

17 T A S Vol VIII, p 43–45

18 T A S II, pp 46 & 188

19 The verse in the Tiruvalangadu Plates "Encircled by the fire of his (Parantaka's) prowess, the Pandya, as if desirous of cooling the heat caused by it, quickly entered the sea (embarked for Ceylon,) abandoning his royal state and the kingdom inherited from his ancestors".

disappearance of the Ay kingdom (circa 920) had its repercussions in Kerala. The camarderie that subsisted between the Cheras and Cholas broke down in this period. The major part of the Ay kingdom was merged with the Chera kingdom. The military strength of the Cheras was accentuated by setting up important military centres at Kandalur and Vizhinjam. The mighty Parantaka who subjugated all lands from Kanchipuram to Kanyakumari never dared to attack Kerala even when it gave asylum to Rajasimha Pandya[20]. There is a tradition handed down from generation to generation that *Konganpada* invaded Chittur in Palghat district during Kotha Ravi was ruling Cochin.[21] The historical fact that the Cochin State as a political unit had not appeared on the map of Kerala during this period belies the contention that the invasion correlated to Kotha Ravi's regime could not happen.

Indu Kotha Varma (944–962)

Even though the inscriptions found at Tali, Trikkakara, Muzhikulam and Tiruvanvandur refer to Indu Kotha Varma, there is nothing in them to deduce the time of his accession as

20 The *Mahavamsa* records thus describe the flight of unlucky Rajasimha leaving his ancient heritage to fall into the hands of the enemy. "At that time the Pandu king through fear of the Chola left his country, took ship and came to Mahatittha. The king had him brought to him, rejoiced greatly when he saw him, gave him an abundant income and granted him a dwelling outside the town When the king of Lanka had armed (with the purpose). 'I will make war on the Chola king take from him his two thrones and give them to the Pandu king, the' nobles dwelling on the island for same reason or other stirred up a sorry strife to the undoing of the Pandu king. The Pandu king thought his soujourn here was of no use to him. He left his diadem and other valuables behind and betook himself to the Keralas". The reference is to the flight of Rajasimha as a last resort to Kerala from Ceylon to the home of his mother Vanavan - Mahadevi

21. "King Goda Ravi Varma in Cochin History" by A. G. Warner in the *'Rama Varma Research Institute Bulletin'* Vol I, No. I, p.44. The *Konganpada* is an important festival celebrated by the people of Chittur and neighbouring areas every year in March in commemoration of a victory alleged to have been gained by Cochin over invaders from the Kongu country. All the incidents of the battle together with the circumstances that led to it are anacted on the night of the festival. One of the most important incidents of this sham fight is the reading of an 'Ola' (Palm-leaf) containing an ultimatum in which one Goda Varma Raja described as a ruler of Cochin is mentioned

the ruler of Mahodayapuram. However the anterior and the posterior inscriptions of Kothai Ravi Varma and Bhaskara Ravi Varma enable us to date his reign in between A. D. 947 to 962. Indu Kotha Varma has been identified with Veera Kotha of the Paliyam Copper Plates of the Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna and in the inscriptions relating to the regnal years of Indu Kotha Varma at Tali, Trikkakara and Tiruvanvandur.

An important political event of this period was the invasion of Kongunad by Parantaka Chola. Some parts of the Kongu country were still ruled by the Chera chieftains closely related to the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram. Kokandan Vira-Narayanan, Kokandan Iravi etc. were the kings of Kongunad about this period. Their inscriptions have been found in places like Vellalur, Namakkal etc. Inscriptions found at Belumampatti in Dharapuram Taluk and other places show that as late as the 12th century, some Chera chieftains ruled the Coimbatore region. Inscriptions of a Chera king by name Ravi Kotha have been found in the Ardha Kapaliswara Temple at Erode.

There is reason to believe that the Kottayam royal family was a branch of the Chera Chieftains of Kongunadu. Even though certain parts of Kongunadu belong to the Pandyas were conquered before the period of Parantaka Chola, the territories of Kongu Cheras, who were relatives of the Cheras of Mahodaya-puram, were conquered only by Parantaka. Consequent on this conquest some of the Kongu Cheras might have shifted their centre to Kerala The invasion of Kongunad by Parantaka might have further deteriorated the relations between the Cheras and the Cholas

The warlike Parantaka ultimately had to face defeat in the war with the Rashtrakutas. The battle of Takkolam (949) ended[22] in the rout of the Chola army by Krishna III and the occupation by the Rashtrakutas of the areas north of Tanjore. For thirty years after 955, the successors of Parantaka were weak

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22. It was in this battle that Rajaditya, Parantaka's son by a Chera princess, was killed by the Ganga feudatory of Krishna. Valabha, the Valluvanad prince,

and the Cheras were free from the Chola menace.

The invasion of Kongunad by Parantaka was an indirect blow to the Chera Empire. Perhaps in retaliation, the Chera army helped the exiled Pandyas to make war on the Cholas. After the death of Parantaka in 955, Rajasimha's son Virapandya made several raids into Nanchinad and the Tirunelveli region, in the course of which Gandaraditya, son of Parantaka was killed. This event is referred to in some of the inscriptions of Virapandya which extol him as *Cholan Talaikonda Virapandyan*.

The construction of temples, institution of arrangements for Brahmin-feeding, and the establishment of Brahmadeyas assumed considerable importance in this period. As a consequence the power of the Nambudiris increased steadily

Bhaskara Ravi I (962–1013)

The successor of Indu Kotha Varma was Bhaskara Ravi I. Bhaskara Ravi is famous in Kerala history as the donor of the Jewish Grant of 1000 A.D. (175 K. E) by which he bestowed various honours and concessions on the merchant Joseph Rabban. More than 20 inscriptions bearing the name of Bhaskara Ravi have been discovered by epigraphists bearing almost the same age and there is a lot of discussion among historians whether all of them relate to the Bhaskara Ravi of the Jewish inscription. On the basis of the astronomical evidence of the inscriptions Elamkulam Kunjan Pillay has established that there were three kings called Bhaskara Ravi who ruled Kerala in different periods. According to him there are three inscriptions of which the date is recorded as the 13th year of Bhaskara Ravi and Jupiter's positions in these three inscriptions reveal that they relate to three different Bhaskara Ravi's [23]. Of these the Bhaskara Ravi of the Jewish Grant was the successor of Indu

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was the aid-de-camp of Rajaditya. He subsequently became a Sanyasin and is known by the name chathuranana Pandita. His younger brother Chattan, therefore, succeeded their father Rayiran the founder of the dynasty

23. *Chila Kerala Charithra Prasnangal*, Part II. Chapter on *Jootha Sasanam*.

Kotha Varmah.[24] The Jewish Copper Plate grant is historically interesting as it records the royal gift to the Jewish chief of the rights of the *Anjuvannam* along with 72 proprietory rights which included the collection of tolls and other revenues. It shows the tolerance of the king apart from the fact that it was a bid to muster the support and loyalty of a commercially important community. The reign of Bhaskara Ravi Varman also marked the first invasion of Kerala by Rajendra Chola.[25] The Chola army sacked Mahodayapuram. Perhaps Bhaskara Ravi Varma I might have been killed during the Chola Chera war of 1018—1019 under the leadership of the Chola Rajendra I.

Bhaskara Ravi II (1018—1021)

After the death of Bhaskara Ravi I, the crown prince Bhaskara Ravi II ascended the throne From the astronomical evidence furnished by inscriptions Bhaśkara Ravi Varman II might have become *Yuvarajah* in 978-79 in the 17th year of Bhaskara Ravi's reign. The inscriptions of this ruler have been discovered

24 The first witness to the Jewish Grant, inscribed in the 39th regnal year of Bhaskara Ravi was Govardhana Marathandan, the ruler of Venad. There are four other inscriptions in which in the name of Govardhana Marthanda occurs — three in the Trikkodithanam Temple and one in the Perunna Temple One of the inscriptions at Trikkodithanam tells us that Govardhana Marthanda, ruler of Venad was appointed to rule over Nanruzhanad, which lay between Kottayam in the North and Odanad in the South. Another inscription reveals that this Govardhana Marthandan was either a contemporary or a successor of Sri Vallabhan Kothai, ruler of Venad. The Mamballi Grant helps us to determine that Sri Vallabhan Kotha was ruler of Venad in November 973 and hence Govardhana Marthandan could not possibly have lived before 950. The list of known Venad rulers, which is complete and continuous after 1100, shows that there is no Govardhana Marthandan after 1100. The language of the inscription in which Govardhana Marthandan's name occurs also is of the period prior to 1100. From all this, we can easily deduce that Govardhana Marthandan and his contemporary Bhaskara Ravi lived between 950 and 1100. (Studies in Kerala History. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, p 238).

25. The discovery of the lost portions of *Eramam* record brings out the Bhaskara Ravi Kantan Kari — Rajendra Chola synchronism and confirms the dating based on astronomical data. It also substantiates the fact of Chola victory in Kerala (M.G.S. Narayanan,Souvenirof the Indian History Congress, 1976, p. 30).

from such wide apart places as Trikkakara, Tirunelli etc. No inscription of Bhaskara Ravi I later than 1019 or of Bhaskara Ravi II later than 1021 has been found. So Bhaskara Ravi Varmah II's reign might have ended in 1021 i.e., two or three years after the death of Bhaskara Ravi I. The defeat of Bhaskara Ravi at the hands of Rajendra weakened the Chera central power This opportunity was exploited by the local chieftains who began to function as independent rulers. The Chola forces subsequently were withdrawn from Kerala for undertaking a greater military venture the invasion of North India and the kingdom of Srivijaya (Malaya, Sumatra etc.)

Veera Kerala (1021—1028)

Yet another Chola invasion of Chera kingdom occurred when Veera Kerala succeeded Bhaskara Ravi Varman II His capital was encircled by the Chola army commanded by Rajendra s son Rajadhiraja and in the course of the war Veera Kerala was trampled to death by an elephant.

Raja Simha (1028—1043)

Raja Simha who succeeded Veera Kerala was a very weak king. He meekly submitted to the ascendency of the Cholas and this is affirmed by the inscriptions of Mannarkoil near Ambasamudram He was a man of letters who wrote some sanskrit plays published in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series

Bhaskara Ravi III (1043—1082)

The inscription belonging to the 13th and 33rd regnal years of this king have come to light. During his reign also the Chola-Chera conflict seems to have gained momentum The *Kalari system* and the *Chaver* (Suicide Squads) armies in Kerala originated during his reign It is believed that he might also have perished in a Chola war.

Ravi Varma (1082—1090)

The Trikkodithanam inscription was issued during the 3rd regnal year of this king. His reign ended when the great Rama Varma Kulasekhara ascended the throne in 1090.

Rama Varma Kulasekhara

Rama Varma Kulasekhara was the last of the Kulasekharas of the Mahodayapuram. He ascended the throne at a highly critical juncture in the history of Kerala. Kerala was then in the throes of a major crisis. It was he who made concentrated efforts to organise a huge army of *chavers* to face the Chola threat. He moved his headquarters from Mahodayapuram to Quilon in the South. The Nampoothiri ascendancy in the body politic of Kerala assumed stupenduous dimensions during his period. He marched against the Cholas and defeated them. The Chola army withdrew to Kottar. The Kulasekhara Kovil Adhikarikal figuring in the Perunnal inscription and the Ramar *Tiruvadi* of the Rameswarth koil inscription have been identified with Ramavarma Kulasekhara. He occupies a unique place in Kerala history as the founder of the illustrious royal house of Venad and who finally erased the Chola menace from the soil of Kerala.

The Chola—Chera Conflict

The ardent desire to revive the old glory of the Cholas prompted Vijayalaya Chola to take advantage of the strife between the Pallavas and the Pandyas to seize the city of Tanjore and establish a small quasi-independent kingdom. His son Aditya I at first maintained the tributary contribution to the Pallava king Aparajita and assisted him to vanquish the Pandyas Then Aditya in combination with the king of Kerala, Sthanu Ravi attacked Pandyas in Coimbatore. The entente between Cheras and Cholas continued during the succession of the Chola king, Parantaka I who entered into matrimonial alliance with the daughter of Rama Varma Kulasekhara and in alliance with him attacked Madurai and defeated a Ceylonese army which came to the aid of the Pandyas[26]. The Cheras however

26 In these campaigns the Nairs of Kerala not only served their own king but in many cases were Commanders in the Chola army because of their great reputation as courageous and well-trained warriors. (George Woodcock. A Portrait of Malabar Coast, p. 87. A record from the North Arcot district commemorates the death of a hero in A. D. 936 in a cattle-raid by a Western Ganga king *(Perumanadigal)* and this may be taken as the first indication of the coming storm. There is also evidence to show that about this time

took advantage of the situation in curbing the Independance of the Ays and their suzerainty over Trivandrum and Vizhinjam, the old capital of the Ays, was transferred as the southernmost fortress of the Cheras. This marked the beginning of the deterioration of the relations between the Cholas and the Cheras. But throughout the tenth century the relations between the Cholas and the Cheras exhibited only a kind of superficial cordiality. The final blow severing the relationship emerged with the ascendency of Raja Raja under whom the Chola expansionism reached high tides. The expansion of the Chera kingdom into Nanjinad was the primary factor that motivated Parantaka to embark on an invidious invasion of the Chera country. Yet another stimulus was the political manoeuvre of the Cheras to transform what was till then called the *vedic* schools in the old South Travancore, to serve as military training institutions. The finale came with the granting of asylum to Rajasimha Pandyan in Kerala after he left Ceylon. However Parantaka was not prepared for a direct face to face controntation. In the years that followed the death of Parantaka and with the Chola power at its zenith under Rajaraja the relationship turned sour. The primary motive of Rajaraja was to reduce to utter subjugation the Pandyas and their allies, the kings of Kerala and Ceylon The Cheras were also conscious of the impending threat. They fortified their military training centres at Kanthalur, Vizhinjam, Talakkulam, Karakantiswaram and other places by converting them into military arsenals and army training centres. Vizinjam was transformed into an arsenal surrounded by deep moats. Rajaraja reched Vizhinjam and fought a pitched battle with the Cheras. Kanthalur was sacked and Rajaraja's inscriptions from the fourth to the fourteenth years extol this event in the words "*Kanthalur Salai Kalam Arutha Rajarajan*"[27] Though this title appears from the fourth year no inscription of Rajaraja has been found in the Kerala and Pandya countries

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Rajaditya, the eldest son of Parantaka, was stationed with a large army including an elephant corps and some cavalry in the district known in inscriptions and literature as *Tirumunaippadi-nadu*. Vellankumaran, a Kerala general of Rajaditya's forces was present at Gramam as early as 936 A.D. where seven years later he constructed a stone temple to Siva on the banks of Pennar

27. Kandalur was at that time probably held by the Pandyas (Venkayya, Introduction, South Indian Inscriptions, p. 7.

having a date earlier than the eight year The Darsanankoppu Record, (T. A. S. I, p. 238) seems the earliest. The Tiruvalangadu Plates give a detailed account of the king's *digvijaya* The aim of Rajaraja's southern campaign was mainly directed to crumble the triple alliance of Pandya, Chera and Simhala against the Chola. It took some years of fighting to complete the conquest to settle the administration of the conquered countries. One of *prasastis* dated in the twentieth year mentions that Rajaraja "destroyed the town of Madurai, conquered the haughty kings of Kollam, Kolladesam and Kodungaloor and the kings of the sea waited on him Rajaraja seems to have sent more than one expedition against the Pandya and his ally the Chera. The Tanjore inscriptions refer to the conquest of the Chera and Pandyas "in the Malai-nadu (Mountain country) quite obviously different from and later than that in which Kandalur and Vizhinjam were attacked [28] The outstanding event in the expedition which took place before 1008 A D was the storming of the strong fortress of Udagai [29] The *Kalingattupparani* also mentions the conquest of Udagai and the founding of the *Chathayam* festival in the Chera country The poet Ottakkuttan says that Rajaraja's outstanding achievement was the crossing of the 'eighteen forests' for the sake of his emissary, and setting fire to Udagai The sudden cause of Rajaraja's storming of Udagai is attributed by some scholars as the result of an insult offered to the king's ambassador.[30] Udagai or Utokai has been identified with Udayapuram or Makotai The inscriptions mention of Rajaraja having defeated eighteen kings [31] In all these campaigns, the

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28 It is these campaigns to which the Tiruvalangadu plates refer as the conquest of Parasurama's country. Also South Indian Inscriptions II Intr P 4 The Tiruvalangadu Plates refer to the conquest of Vizhinjam thus "Thus commandant (*Dandanatha*) of this ornament of the solar race then conquered Vilinja, which had the sea for its moat, whose extensive ramparts were shining aloft which was impregnable to other warriors and which was the permanent abode of the Goddess of Victory"

29 T A S II p 5

30 The Colas, K A Nilankanta Sastri, 1955, Madras, p 171 Some opine that the Chola ambassador was slain in Kerala and on hearing it Rajaraja rushed to Kerala with a huge army after the Chalukyan War and burnt Udagai

31 Indian Antiquary XXII, p 142 Kerala was at this time divided into 18 Nadus like Venad Odanad etc *Kulothunga Chozan Ula* refers to Rajaraja as cutting

central figure in the action was the crown prince Rajendra who was soon after made Mahadandanayaka of the Vengi and Gangamandalas. He wore the title *Panchavanmaraya*, tusker of Mummudi-Chola. He "seized the Tuluva and Konkana, held Mleya (Malabar) and punished aside the Chera as well as the Telunga and Rattiga" [32] The Tiruvalangadu Plates contain a highly vivid and colourful depiction of his invasion of Ceylon after the conquest of Chera country. "Rama built with the aid of the monkeys. a causeway across the sea and then slew with great difficulty the king of Lanka by means of sharp-edged arrows. But Rama was excelled by this (king) whose powerful army crossed the ocean by ships and burnt up the king of Lanka". Rajaraja's expedition to Ceylon was motivated to curb the ascendancy of Kerala and Kannada mercenaries in a large part of the kingdom of Mahinda V who was then king of Lanka.[33] His invasion of Ceylon was also a diplomatic design to disassociate any help reaching Kerala from that country

Parakesari-Varman, Rajendra Chola I came to the throne in 1012. During the thirty-three years of his reign, Rajendra indulged in extensive wars and conquests. In the inscription of his twenty-sixth year from Tirumalavadi it is laid down that his umbrella of State is said to have functioned as if it were a shadow of the white umbrella of his father who conquered with his army the Ganges in the North, Ceylon in the South. Mahodai in the West and Kadaram in the East[34]. However when Rajendra

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off 18 heads. But the Vikrama Chozhan Ula says "in a day he took possession of Malainad defeating the armies controlling the eighteen Churams" *Churam* is a commonly used Malayalam word meaning mountain pass and not forest or desert as explained by Tamil writers. There are 18 *Churams* in the Western Ghats connecting Tamil-Kannada region with Kerala. Chera armies guarded all the 18 passes. The Chola army 'numbering 9 lakhs having plundered the Chalukya country slaughtering women, children and Brahmins' quickly marched against the Chera armies controlling the 18 passes and took them by surprise. It seems that the Chola army left in Kerala was completely ousted while Rajaraja was engaged in his war against Satyasraya. The ambassador sent by him for negotiation was probably insulted and killed The mention of ambassador anyhow reveals that the previous invasions were not successful.

32. The Colas opp. cited, p. 172, One among the many titles of Rajaraja was *Keralantaka.*

33. K. A Neelakanta Sastri, opp. cit. p. 173.

34. S. I. I., V. 663

came to the throne, the Chera army had almost recaptured almost all places conquered by the Cholas. The Chera army drove out the Cholas from Nanjinad. In the newly built palace named *Keralam Puthu Malikai* at Suchindram. Chera commandoes with their army were garrisoned to repel any threat from the Chola. It was only after Rajendra Chola's naval expedition to Ceylon and complete defeat of King Mahinda that he turned his attention to Kerala. The Chera army suffered great reverses before the formidable Chola army and navy Vizhinjam and Kandalur fell to the Cholas Vizhinjam was renamed Rajendra Chozha Pattanam. Kandalur was razed to the ground Inscription 363 of 1917,[35] informs us that Rajendra repeated his father's performance at Kanthalur which is confirmed by the Tiruvalangadu plates. The Pandyan Viceroy, Jatavarman Sundara Chola Pandya, (the son of Rajendra) was placed in charge of the Kerala possessions. The inscription of Sundara Chola Pandya states that Suchindram in Nanjinad came to be called Sundara-Chola-Chathurvedimangalam after the name of the Viceroy.[36] Another inscription dated in the 11th year of Sundara Chola Pandya informs that the strategic fortress of Kottar where was stationed a strong garrison of Cholas was under the charge of a Eastern Chalukya King Vijayaditya Vikkyana.[37] Rajendra's army next proceeded to Mahodayapuram It was attacked on three sides — one division moving North from South Travancore and another West through Palghat, Kambam and other mountain passes and the navy attacking from sea. The Tiruvalangad Plates and other Chola inscriptions are replete with references to the intensity with which the battle was fought In the 6th year of his succession in A D. 1018, Rajendra seized the heirloom of the Chera king including the crown praised by many and rightfully worn by him and the garland emitting the red rays. The Tiruvalangad plates say the fearless Maduranthaka "cross the Sahya and forthwith set upon the

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35 Ibid.

36. T. A. S IV, pp 134–35

37 The record refers to the Grant by the Eastern Chalukya king who styled him Sarvalokasraya Sri Visnuvardhana Maharaja. The identity of this Chalukya prince has not been established.

Kerala in great force and there ensued a fierce battle which brought ruin upon kings. After having thus conquered the Kerala king and harrowed the land guarded by the austerities of the Lord of the Bhregus, the prince returned to his capital, the abode of prosperity." The Chola inscriptions tell us that the Chera Princes fell one after another in the battle-field in an effort to save the capital Mahodayapuram.

The inscriptions of the time however give an inkling that Rajendra's kingdom enjoyed unbroken peace. There were rebellions in the Pandya and Chera kingdoms which called for severe action and extensive campaign made for suppression of these uprisings. It is doubtful whether the complete subjugation of the Cheras ever materialised

The withdrawal from Kerala of the majority of Chola forces for taking up an ambitious invasion of North India and Malaya and Sumatra etc. led to the destruction of the remaining regiments of Chola army by the combined forces of the vanguished Pandyas, Cheras and Ays. This provoked Rajadhiraja, the son of Rajendra who invaded Kerala in 1020. The Chola army encircling Kerala through South Travancore, Palghat and Kolathunad and the Chola navy by sea killed Veera, Kerala, the succesor of Bhaskara Ravi II, his close associate and relative Kanda Ravi Varman of Iramakudam in Ezhimalai and the king of Venad. In this encounter Sundara Pandya died fighting. The Chola inscription of Manimangalam states that Vira Kerala was trampled to death by an elephant [38]

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38 S. I. I. III, p. 56 quoted by K. A. N. Sastri, The Cholas, op. cit. Among the three allied kings of the South (Pandyas) (he) cut off on a battle-field the beautiful head of Manabharanan, (which was adorned with) large jewels (and) which was inseparable from the golden crown, seized in battle Vira-Keralan whose ankle-rings were wide, and was pleased to get him trampled by his furious elephant Attivarana; and drove to the ancient Mullaiyur, Sundara Pandyan of endless great fame, who lost in a hot battle the royal white parasol, the branches (of hairs) of the white yak, and the throne, and who ran away, - his crown dropping down, (his) hair dishevelled and (his) feet tired. (He) sent the undaunted king of Venadu to the country of heaven and destroyed in anger the Senior (chief) of Iramakudam While the strong Villavan (Cera), in his terror hid himself in the jungle, (the Cola) put on a fresh (garland of) Vanji flower, and forthwith destroyed the ships at Kandalursalai on the never--decreasing ocean

These events in course of time led to the fragmentation of the Chera country into several petty principalities which engaged themselves in several internal feuds in the following five decades or more during which time the Chera power was on the eclipse. The unity that was the hallmark of the Kulasekhara kingdom disappeared. The Cholas tried to set up an independent Venad with the avowed objective of assigning a sentinel cum buffer state role to ensure the Chola supremacy in the South as the Pandya and the Cheras incollusion with the Ceylonese rulers were on the look out for uprooting the Chola hegemony. The whole of Kerala never formed part of the Chola kingdom because inscriptions point out that Rajadhiraja and Vira Rajendra I had to fight sporadically on with the Chera rulers. The Karuvur inscription of the fourth regnal year of Vira Rajendra (1068—69) records that he killed the king of Pottappi, the Kerala, the young brother of king Jananatha of Dhara, and Vira Kesari, the son of the Pandya Sri Vallabha The Manimangalam inscription of 1069—70 mentions about among the list of his expeditions, one against Udagai and the Keralas, from which Vira Rejendra returned after collecting a large tribute in the form of elephants. That the Kulasekharas retained some kind of paramountcy over the chieftains is testified from some of the inscriptions of Rajasimha, Bhaskara Ravi and Ravi Varma. An inscription of Rajasimha shows that he submitted to the Cholas and was on cordial terms with Rajendra Chola for he constructed the Rajendra Chola Vinnagar temple at Mannar Coil near Ambasamudram[39]. The Thazhakkad Church record refers to certain privileges given by this king to Iravi Chathan and Chathan Vadukan, two prominent Christian merchants of the Manigramam guild.[40] When Kulothunga Chola became king, the Pandyas with the help of the Cheras recovered their paternal possessions of Nanjinad and Tirunelveli regions. Therefore Kulothunga after the Chalukya war lost no time to march against the Pandyas and the Cheras and quelled their revolts. The fortress at Nanjinad was demolished. The undated Chidambaram

39. The Cholas, op. cit. p. 243.

40. T. A. S. VIII, p.39

inscription states that Kulothunga overcame five Pandyan kings, set fire to the fortress of Kottar like Arjuna burning Khandava forest, subdued the numerous forces of the Keralas and erected a pillar of victory on the sea-coast. Thus it was that he reduced to obedience *(Savidhikam akarot)* the rebellious group of vassal kings.[41] The *Vikramasolan-ula*[42] depicts how the army of Kulothungan routed the carp of the enemy (Pandya) destroyed the bow (the emblem of the Chera) and twice destroyed the fleet at Salai (Kanthalur). The *Kallingattupparani* refers to the march of Kulothunga against Kandalur and Vizhinjam. It records that the Chera army turned their backs when the Chola army marched to fight. The *Kulothunga—solan Pillaitiamil* mentions the great slaughter inflicted on the *Chavers*. veteran soldiers who had banished from their hearts all fear of death and who formed a considerable section of the forces of the Pandyas and the Cheras. Kulothunga however did not restore the Chola administrative arrangements introduced by Rajaraja and Rajendra, but only established military outposts *(nilaippadai)*[43] along the important routes of communication in the Pandya and Kerala territory. The names of some places were altered to substantiate proof of Chola overlordship. Vizhinjam was called Rajendra Chola-pattinam. Kulothunga's arrangement for

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41 The Cholas op. cit. p.312 The more detailed account given by the Tamil inscriptions is as follows: 'Having resolved in his mind to conquer the Pandimandalam together with great fame, he despatched his great army,—which possessed excellent horses resembling the waves of the sea war-elephants resembling ships, and infantry resembling water,—as though the Northern ocean was overflowing the Southern ocean. He completely destroyed the forest which the five Pandyas had entered as refuge when they flead cowering with fear, from the field of battle. He subdued their country, drove them into hot jungles in hills where woodmen roamed about, and planted pillars of victory in every direction. He seized the pearl fisheries, the Podiyil mountain where the three kinds of Tamil flourished, the Saiyya mountain in the heart of which were found furious rutting elephants and Kanni, and fixed the boundaries of the Southern (Pandya) country. While all the *Savers* in the Western hill-country ascended to the unique heaven (attained by warriors who fell fighting), he was pleased to bestow on his commanders, who were mounted on horses, settlements on every road, including one at Kottaru to strike terror into his enemies'

43. The inscription of the 39th reign of Kulothunga refers to the *nilaippadai* of Kottar. T. A. S. I, pp 246 47

governance of the conquered regions was mainly confined in the extraction of annual tributes from the subordinate rulers of the Pandya and Kerala territory. The inscriptions of the time do not give an inkling about any political subjugation of these rulers to the Cholas. This arrangement led to the banding together of the disgruntled chieftains to rally round King-Rama Varma Kulasekhara who is venerated as Rishi Ramar Tiruvady in inscription.[44]The inscriptions speak of this king being invested with both secular and religious supreme powers. From the Perunna inscription we learn that these pious kings lived at Nediya Tali near Kodungallur. It must be remembered here that brisk military training under the leadership of Taliyazhavans (the Nampudiri representatives of temples) was imparted even before the time of Rajendra. There are references to above 36,000 Nampoodiris trained in the military academy at Kandalur and other institutions and 1008 fencing schools for giving training to the Nampoodiri boys. The Nampoodiris imparted training to non-Brahmins in military skills. It is said that even women took to military training during this period[45]. It is claimed that the heroic suicide squads *(chavers) were* organised[46] during this formative period.

These developments and the ill-organized political arrangement of the conquered territories by the Cholas resulted in a revival of hostilities and culminated in the reconquest by Kulothunga to face the allied forces under the leadership of Rama Varma Kulasekhara at Quilon. The Cholas conquered all the regions south of Quilon and the town itself was destroyed. But in the end the Chola army was driven away from Quilon under the leadership of Kulothunga's famous general Naraloka Vira.[47]. The Chola army withdrew to Kottar leaving a considerable

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44. Parambam Tali Temple inscription

45. Studies in Kerala History. op. cit. p.244.

46. In the Chidambaram Sanskrit inscription of unknown date the reference *Keralanam Balam Athi Bahalam* probably refers to *chavers*. (Epigraphic indica V. p.104)

47. From the inscriptions of Jatavarman Sri Vallabha, we understand that this general was known by other titles, like Kalingaraya distinguished himself in the southern campaigns of Kulothunga.

portion of the Chola kingdom in the hands of his enemy. Later the Chola army left to Kottar and Nanchinad entrusting the region to a Pandyachief from whom the king of Venad conquered Kottar and the remaining portion of Nanchinad in 1119 or 1120 A. D.[48] The Chola menace which cast its dark shadow over Kerala virtually came to an end. Rama Varma Kulasekhara, the last of the Kulasekharas of the Mahodayapuram migrated to Quilon and founded the Venad kingdom. Quilon became the *Tenvanchi* (Vanchi of the South) and its ruler *Tenvachivan*.

After the burning of the ancient capital of the later Cheras, Mahodayapuram and the palace, the incessant inroads of the Cholas retarded the progress in combination with the calamitous decline in foreign trade on which the Cheras depended heavily for their prosperity. The town was once for all abandoned to the local chieftains and Rama Varma Kulasekhara moved first to Kodungalloor and then to Quilon, in the Kingdom of Venad where he established his capital in 1102. There is reason to believe that the family of the ruler of Venad who conspired with the Cholas and served as their henchman might have been removed and Rama Varma Kulasekhara established himself as the ruler of Venad. Till the consolidation of the petty pricipalities into a political unit called Travancore in the 18th century by Marthanda Varma extending from Cape Comorin in the South to Pallipuram in the North only the region between Cape Comorin

48. The authors of the Travancore State Manuals — V. Nagam Aiya and T. K. Velu Pillai opine that Nanchinad first became part of Venad in 1116 A. D. This is on the basis of a Tamil verse occurring in the Sree Padmanabha Swamy temple records. But Elamkulam disagrees with their astronomical calculation and fixes the date at 1119 or 1120 A.D. on the basis of the clues given in *Sankaranarayaniam*. According to the verse in the Padmanabha Swamy Temple records the verse refers to the Koopaka king conquering Kottar and Nanchinad on the 11th day of the month of Avani in the Kollam year 292 (1116) when Jupiter was in Kumbham — Elalmkulam says: I have come across two other versions of the records which denote the year 295 (1119) and 296 (1120). Now there are three years mentioned in three versions of the same record. It is easy to find out the correct year on the basis of the position of the planet Jupiter stated in the record. On the 11th of Chingam 292 Jupiter was in Thulam, 110 degrees away from Kumbham. On the other hand Jupiter was in Kumbham on 11th Chingam 296 (1120). The present system is to reckon the year of the Kollam era by the position of Jupiter at the beginning of the Chaitra month. If this system had been in existence at that time, the year 295 will also be correct. Hence the date of the record must be either 1119 or 1120.

and Trivandrum remained in the hands of Kulasekharas. Even Quilon had to be forsaken -- Venad thereafter maintained the dynastic name of Kulasekharas which was used by the rulers of Travancore until 1949 when Travancore State was finally absorbed into the Indian Republic.

XIII THE LEGEND OF THE PERUMALS

Viewed against the above narration emerges the contention of the traditionalists relating to the terminal period of the Kulasekhara as contained in the story of the Perumals. The traditional account in *Keralolpathi* avers that Parasurama motivated 64 migrant joint families of Brahmins to settle in Kerala, after bestowing on them with laws and institutions. The failure of the Brahmins to adhere to Parasurama's dictum, led to the confluence at Tirunavay, which resolved to the reign of a king chosen from outside. This paved the way for the mythical lineage of Perumals. Each Perumal ruled for a period of 12 years. In all 25 such dignitaries reigned as Perumals; the last of whom being the legendary Cheraman Perumal who on being proselytised into Islam, partitioned his kingdom to his relatives and embarked on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 345. This apparently has no historical basis, though it has gained popular acceptance as to figure in travelogues of foreign visitors to Kerala. William Logan who paradoxically rejected the *Keralolpathi* "as a farrage of legendary nonsense having for definite aim the securing to the Brahmin caste of unbounded power and influence in the country" accepted this legend as authentic without bestowing any critical thought on its details. This traditional account without any historical foundation also finds a prominent place in the accounts of South Indian History by Prof. K. A. Neelakanta Sastri.[1] In a critical examination of Neelakanta Sastri's assertion Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai obser- as follows.[2] ' According to the *Keralolpatti*, the great Krishna

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1 Ibid, p. 139

2 Studies in Kerala History Op.cit 189-190, (pp. 36-37) The author of the Cochin State Manual characterises the narrative of the *Keroloipathi* as 'apocryphal' and remarks thus "The later kings of Kerala were probably known popularly by the generic name of Perumel or Cheraman Perumal (the big man of Chera or Kerala) and epigraphic research has revealed the fact

Deva Raya of Vijayanagar sent three Perumals to Kerala: Adirajaperumal, Pandiperumal and Cheraman Perumal. The first two ruled for twelve years each. Cheraman Perumal so endeared himself to the Nambudiris that they retained him for three terms. When at the end of 36 years, the Perumal did not go back to Vijayanagar. Krishna Deva Raya came with an army to conquer Kerala. He was defeated. It was in this period that the great Sankaracharya was born. He prescribed a strict code of untouchability and caste differentiation. These are the ingredients which many have used to buttress the theory that "Twelve-year Perumals" ruled this country in the Sangam Age or the post-Sangam Age. Krishna Deva Raya lived in the 16th century. He had a short reign of 21 years. yet he sent 3 perumals who jointly reigned for over 60 years! According to the legend, Cheraman Perumal became king in Kali *Swarga Sandeha prapya* (A. D. 428). But he visited the Tiruvanchikkulam temple in *Purudhee Samasraya* (A. D 343). He also visited Valapattanam (Ballapatam) fort which was founded by Valabha, the ruler of Kolathunad in the 11th century. And Sankaracharya, who lived in the 8th and 9th centuries (Circa A. D. 788 – 820) becomes the contemporary of both Valabha who lived in the 11th century and Krishna Deva Raya who lived in the 16th century. With such an astonishing array of inconsistencies in one story, it is incredible that it should be accepted as history by learned historians like Prof. Nilakanta Sastri

The early Chera Kings of the Sangam Age never assumed the title Perumal or Kulasekhara. The Kalangad inscription[3] states that *Tribhuvana Chakravarthigal Perumal Kulasekhara Devar* was a petty ruler of the Pandya dynasty with suzerainty

that Kerala or divisions thereof were invaded and temporarily subjugated several times in the tenth and the subsequent centuries by the Cholas, the Pandyas and others. The confusion of the tradition relating to the rule of the Perumals in the early centuries of the Christian era and of that relating to the rule of the Chola, Pandya and other Kings or their Viceroys in the subsequent centuries seems to be the genesis of the *Keralolpathi* narrative. That there is nothing far-fetched or improbable in this conjecture will be admitted when it is remembered that the *Keralolpathi* makes the Perumal who came to Kerala in A.D. 428 the nominee of Anagundi Krishna Rayar, the well known king of Vijayanagar, who flourished in the early part of the sixteenth century."

3. T. A. S. I, p. 265.

over Shencottah-Tenkasi region. The *Tiruvalur* and *Tiruvella* inscriptions make sufficiently clear that the Kulasekharas who ruled Kerala in the eleventh century were called Perumals. The Alupas, the Pandyas, the Gangas and the Pallavas also used the titles *Perumanadigal* or its shrunken form *Perumal*. The kings of Venad in later days were called Kulasekhara Perumals. The *Talis*, the *Taliyatiris*, the sixty-four gramams, the ascendancy of the Namboothiris, the presence of Muslims etc. occurring in *Keralolpathi* did not survive in a period before 8th century A. D.

The term *Tali* now applied to temples dedicated to Siva was originally applied to stone or rockcut temples. The *Taliyathiris* or the representatives of the Namboothiri trustees came into being only in the first half of the 11th century[4]. The very statement in the *Keralolpathi* that the Brahmins emigrated from Kerala consequent on the failure of the *Taliyathiris* to carry out the duties, affirms that the period refers to the century after eleven. Further the Brahmins obtained a dominant position in the social fabric only after Rajendra Chola's invasion of Kerala in A.D. 1028. The fabricated narrative adumbrated in the *Keralolpathi* of mid-eighteenth century attempts to establish a primeval Brahmin claim to the land of Kerala.

The Cheraman legend preserved in the *Keralolpathi* that Cheraman Perumal, the last of the Perumals embraced Islam after renouncing Hinduism and partitioned his kingdom among his companions and relatives and left on a pilgrimage to Mecca in *Kali Cheraman desaprapya* (345 A.D.) looms large in the traditional early history of Kerala. It finds a prominent place in the accounts of foreign travellers like Duarte Barbosa, Barros, Canter Visscher etc. who visited Kerala after the arrival of the Portuguese even though early travellers or geographers, whether Muslim, Christian or Jew who came to this region before Barbosa had not dealt on this tradition. Sheik Zainuddin of Ponnani, in the 16th century, in his *Tohfut-Ul-Muja-hideen* spoke of it as "the common and earliest tradition that exists" The Tohfut continues "amongst the Muhammadans of Malabar, the conversion to Islamism of the king is believed to have taken place in the time of the Prophet, it having been occasioned by that monarch's perceiving in a vision during night the partition

4 The Nedumpuram Tali Inscription of A.D. 1056.

of the moon, which miraculous circumstance induced him to set out upon a journey to visit the Prophet. And he met the Prophet himself in Mecca according to Calicut Muhammadans"[5] . This vitiates the possibility of the meeting of the apostate Perumal and the apostasy to Islam some three hundred years after the demise of the Prophet. The *Keralolpathi* records that the pilgrimage to Mecca occurred in 355 A.D. which is obviously two hundred years before the birth of the Prophet. Canter Visscher rejects the whole tradition as filled with trifles. It was William Logan who lent an aura of historical truth by modifying the date of the Perumal's conversion to Islam in 825 A. D. linking it with the tale of an Arab that a tomb of that period (826 A.D.) seen near Zafar on the Arabian coast. The existence and purport of the Arabian epitaph has since been discredited due to lack of definite historical testimony. Some other historians accepted the version linking the great Cheraman Perumal Nayanar who lived in the former half of the 9th century as one in the line of the twelve year Perumals. There is yet another tradition that the Perumal embraced Christianity and visited St. Thomas Shrine at Mylapore and was interred alongside the tomb of St. Thomas[6]. Authors like the compiler of the Cochin State Manual opined that "without pledging ourselves to this date, we may assume these events to have happened about the fifth or sixth century A.D. in which case the faith to which the last of the Perumals became a convert must have been to Buddhism which made great progress in Southern India in the early centuries of the Christian era"[7] . Sekkilar says that he was an ardent devotee of Siva. The story of Perumal's conversion and the partitioning of the kingdom are not warranted

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5. Rawland's Translation, pp 74-75

6. De Conto and Faria-y-Souza are the two writers who uphold this tradition De Conto himself was not certain whether the conversion took place in the fourth or in the sixth and Faria-Y-Souza cuts the ground from under his feet by his surprising statement that the Perumal was one of the three kings who visited the Infant Jesus at Bethelhem (p 8 Quoted from Mediaeval Kerala. P K.S Raja Annamalai University, 1953)

7. Opp.cit. p. 37. Kokkil Kelu Nair in his memorandum on the Syrian and Jewish Copper Plates says that "the Perumal became a convert to Jainism and made a pilgrimage to Magadha which was later corrupted into Mecca

by the historical evidence that emerges from the study of the inscriptions and other historically important literary sources. It is now settled that the period between 9th and 11th centuries cover the important reigns of the Kulasekharas like Sthanu Ravi, Kotharavi, Indu Kotha, Bhaskara Ravi and others.

This in short is the impenetrable mystery surrounding the religion of the illustrious legendary hero of the Keralolpathi. No Tamil work of the period bears testimony to the fact that Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Kulasekhara Alwar were not sons of the soil of Kerala to be classified as outsiders and the negation of the practice of succession by inheritance prevalent among the Kulasekharas. Further we have epigraphical evidence in the Rameswarathu Koil Inscription of Quilon that the last Cheraman Perumal was Rama Varma Kulasekhara (1090-1102 A.D.) who was a devout Hindu. The period saw the many faceted crystallisation of Bhakthi cult in Tamilakom including Kerala and in this respect the literature of the period is unparalleled with the literature elsewhere in India. The influx of the Aryans and the emergence of *Chathurvarnya* or caste system are well nigh indicated in the *Mathavilasaprahasana* of Mahendra Vikrama Pallavan and the *Dasakumaracharita* of Dandi. Appar, Tirujnanasambandar and even Huen-Tsang (642 A.D.) refer to the hastening decline of Buddhism. The awakening was further accentuated by the revivalist activities of the saints like the great Sankara, Kulasekhara Alwar and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and the rise of Siva and Vishnu temples as the disseminating centres for the propagation of Hindu tenets.

In short the twelve year Perumal rule have no place in the realm of Kerala history in the light of the new historical data that have come to bear upon the establishment of the Kulasekharas. The *Keralolpathis* known by different names[8] and having many versions, all written in or about the 18th

8. *Kerala Salbhavam*, *Kerala Mahatmyam* etc. are some of the names by which the book was known. Ulloor refutes that the reference to 36 Perumals (represented by the *Kali Dadurdharam* (2988) from B.C. 113 to A.D. 343 (indicated by the *Kali* Bhuvibhagam, 3444) covering a period of 456 years as incredible and the names of the Perumals like *Keya*, *Kotti*, *Komban* etc. sounds fantastic. The narratives in the *Kerala Mahatmyam* and *Keralolpathi* are unauthenticated perjury according to Vaikom Pachu Muttathu, the first historian of Travancore history.

century represent only the innumerable legends (*Sthalapuranas*) that have sprung up over the years in different parts of South India like the *Kongudesarajakkal*, a manuscript of the 17th century bearing on the early history of Kongudesam[9] with the avowed objective to perpetuate the Brahmanical supremacy over the kings of the period. The Cheraman legend which resembles a jigsaw puzzle with many a missing link like the traditionary reclamation of land by Parasurama and the Namboothiri sovereignty is without any solid historical foundation.

XIV SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE UNDER THE KULASEKHARAS

The history of the reigns of later Cheras of Mahodayapuram from Kulasekhara Alwar to Bhaskara Ravi forms a glorious phase in Kerala's past. It marks a water-shed in the history of Kerala. This formative period saw the socio-political dominance of Aryan Brahmins, the unique caste system, matriliny, plurality and peaceful co-existence of various faiths, the evolution of Malayalam as a separate dialect, the rise of temples and ritual oriented Hinduism and the decline of Buddhism and Jainism, the birth of the great seers like Sankara, Kulasekhara Alwar, Cheraman Perumal Nayanar, Viralminda Nayanar and the rise of merchant guilds and progress in the field of trade and commerce.

Political Divisions:

The Chera inscriptions help to present a kaleidoscopic picture of the division of the kingdom into many districts, big and small. The Kulasekhara was the Lord of Mahodayapuram (*Mahodayapura Parameswara*) and the overlord of Kerala (*Keraladhinatha*). He did not directly administer the entire

9 In this book, the Chera list of kings goes upto imaginary ones. There is reference in *Keralolpathi* that Kongus in alliance with the Rashtrakutas led many expeditions into Kerala. Logan adds that this was an ever recurring feature till the dying day of this northern power (Malabar Manual, p 281). Taylor's translation in the Madras Journal of Literature Science Vol. XIV, p 6. K.A. Neelakanta Sastri observes 'The Kongudesarajakkal Charithram and the *Keralolpathi* in its various recensions have often been overrated and are in fact of very little value so too are the numberless Sthalapuranas'.

kingdom. Each *nadu* or district had its own hereditary or nominated chiefs sometimes a Kshatriya. but more often Samanthas or Nayars. The nads were Venad, Odanad, Nanruzhainad, Munjunad, Vembalanad, Kizhmalainad, Kalkkarinad, Nedumpuraiyurnad, Valluvanad, Erainad, Poranad, Kurumbrainad, Puraikkizhanad and Kolathunad. The northern borders of the Chera Kingdom cannot be exactly located. As the records of Bhaskara Ravi Varman's reign have been found at Tirunelly in Wynad and as Ramaghata Muvar of Mushika fought and died under the Kerala banner against the Cholas, there is no doubt that Puzhinad from Ponnani to Kasaragod was also included in the Chera Kingdom. Tradition ascribes that the crown of Kerala had been kept in the Laccadives. It is likely that the authority of the Chera King extended to these islands also till they were conquered by Rajendra I in A.D. 1019. From the fact that the cognomen Veera Kerala affixed with the names like Vira Narayana, Veera Kerala Varma, Veera Kerala Adhiraja Rajadeva Veera Kerala Amarabhujanta etc. of the Kongu Kings (known also as Kongu Cheras) it is presumed that certain parts of Karnataka were once within the Chera Kingdom. A major part of Nilgiris and certain parts of Coimbatore and Salem districts also once fell within the Chera Kingdom. This might have been the lay out of the Chera Kingdom till Raja Raja I's generals annexed Kongunad.[1] The great feudatories of

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1 The southernmost province of the empire was Venad. It included within itself the areas now comprised in the Quilon, Kottarakkara and Chirayinkil Taluks and parts of Trivandrum and Nedumangad Taluks and had its capital at Quilon. To the north of Venad lay Odanad which included the Karunagappally Taluk of Quilon District and the Mavelikara and Karthigappally Taluks of Alleppey District and the Mavelikkara and Karthigappally Taluks of Alleppey District. It had its capital first at Kandiyur Mattam near Mavelikkara and later at Eruva in Kayamkulam. The *nadus* of Nantuzhainad (Tiruvalla-Changanacherry region) and Munjunad (Kottayam area) lay to the north-east of Odanad. To the north of Munjunad lay Vempolinad (Vaikam Meenachal area) and to the east of the latter Kizhumalainad Kizhumalainad comprised the Thodupuzha-Muvattupuzha area and its capital was located at Karikode near Thodupuzha. To its north lay Kalkarainad which included Trikkakara and neighbouring regions in the Ernakulam and Trichur Districts. Further north lay Nedumpurayurnad (Talappilli-Palghat-Chittur area). Valluvanad (Ponnani-Perintalmanna-Tirur area), Erainad (Ernad area). Polanad (Calicut area) Kolathunad (Cannanore Kasaragod area) and Puraikizhanad (North Wynad-Guddalore area).

Kolathunad, Puraikkizhanad, Kurumbranad, Eralnad, Valluvanad, Kizhmalainad, Vembalanad and Venad were hereditary Governors. The northern-most district of Kolathunad was almost independent and was forcibly brought under the Cheras towards the end of the 9th century. The Southern-most districts of Venad was carved out of the ancient Kingdom of Vels.

Administration

A study of the royal titles and other details in the Chera documents reveals that the rulers were sovereign hereditary monarchs[2] except for the period of Chola ascendancy in the 11th century (1018—1087 A. D.). The kingship symbolised in the strict sense all the rituals of Brahmanical tradition. The *Tulabhara* (weighing the King against gold or silver) and the *Hiranyagarbha* (the dipping of the king into the consecrated water in a vessel made of gold) were ceremonies that formed part of accessions. The gold and silver used for weighing on these sacred occasions were distributed among Brahmin priests.

The Kulasekharas adopted the title of Perumal which denoted emperor. They were also called Cheraman Perumal. It was only towards the end of the 8th century that the title of Perumal was used by the kings of Kerala.[3] Before that they were simply called Cheramans. Like the Kadambas and Pallavas some of them like Sthanu Ravi bore the title of Kulasekhara. Bhaskara Ravi is pictured as *Konoyinmeykandam*[4] (or the king whose

2. According to modern researchers like Burton Stein, the Kingly authority is expressed in moral or ethical terms. He calls it Ritual kingship. Stein observes "What is perhaps most interesting of the period from the early eighth century on is that the ancient Tamil, heroic kingly tradition and the Jaina moral kingly tradition continued to co-exist albeit in a declining manner with the ritual or Brahmanical kingly conception of the time". The Kingship was such that sovereignty was shared among powerful locally based persons. The various *dana sasanas* are the best illustrations. For details see All the King's Mana, Burton Stein, Madras, 1984, Chapter I

3. The Tiruvalur inscription (TAS. I. 265) and Tiruvella inscription (TAS. II 176) testify to this. Before that kings like Rajasekhara used *Perumandigal* instead of *Perumal*. This title was used also by the Pandyas, Gangas and Pallavas. Perumal is deemed to be the abridged form of *Perumanagdigal*

4. T. A. S. Vol. II, p. 44.

body is free from disease) in the Jewish copper plates. These titles to a very great extent were attached to the names to signify their ostentatious display of imperial status which was often a misnomer.

The person of the king was not sacrosanct. The king was not only the commander-in-chief in war but also the founder of all honour and justice. The king conferred many honours and titles on his subjects. The Tillaisthanam record of Sthanu Ravi and Aditya conferring certain honours on Vikki Annan in the Jewish Copper Plates of Bhaskara Ravi Varman granting *Pakalvilakku* (A lighted lamp carried in front of him during day time), *Pavada* (Having a cloth spread out before him to walk upon), *Ayintolakam* (to travel in a decorated hammock called *Manchal) Kuda* (holding a silk parasol over his head) etc. In his capacity as preserver of justice, all disputes which could not be settled by the local assemblies or the local *Naduvazhis* were finally disposed by him. In times of war, the Governors of the districts and the Commanders of the army and other feudatories were summoned to the capital for counsel and assistance. The Feudatories had their own contingents of soldiers of battle.[5] In the Periyapuranam, Chekkizhar states that when Cheraman Perumal Nayanar breathed his last, many persons committed suicide. The reference is to the Chaver or suicide squads who made their first appearance during the Chola wars although they might have come into existence much earlier.[6]

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5. Perumal had a capital force *Mulasainya* consisting of 1000 Nayars (captains) under the commander-in-chief (*Padamel Nayar*). Each of these Nayars appears to have had 10 *Chekons* (Ordinary soldiers) under his control. Similarly the *Naduvazhis* (district governors) had 300, 500, 600 or 700 Nayars under them with the same type of organisation. These feudal forces raised from cultivating class were used for protection of property and supervision of local administration. (Kerala through the Ages, 1980 Trivandrum, p 25)

6. From *Akananuru*, we learn that many people committed self-immolation on hearing the death of Cheralathan (5th century A.D.). The custom might have been a relic of the past. Some authors opine that the famous bands of Nayar and Thiyya soldiers known as *Changatham* (probably derived from the Sanskrit word *Samghata*) of the later middle ages on their emergence to this practice. The *Amoncos* or *Amachi* in the Portuguese records probably refer to these people. The *Payyannur Pattola*, a very ancient Malayalam work of the 13th century has the following 'Chavalarai pole niyakappuram, Changatham venam perikayippoi'. Attention is also invited in this context to the famous *Mamanka Chavers* of Valluvakonathiri.

The Kollam inscription of Rama Kulasekhara and the Jewish Copper plates testified to the above fact. From many records of the age we learn that the king used to depute princes of the royal family as his emissaries to district headquarters and Brahmin and other village assemblies. The reference to the Brahmin Council called *Nalu Tali* in Kodungallur as *Meltali*, *Keezhtali*, *Chingapurathu Tali* and *Arattali*,[7] amply illustrate that the Brahmin oligarchy wielded very great influence on the king in the governance of the country. As in the case of the Pandyas and Cholas, the kingship of the Cheras was also based on the *Smritis* and *Sastras*, the frame-work being that of the classical Indian type with the Brahminical ideal of *Dharma*. The social rule (Samudaya Bharanam) in which Nampoothiris confer the Kingship and the kings accepting it from them with all reverence and meek submissiveness as depicted in the Keralolpathis perhaps point to the domination of the Brahmin Councillors who acted as court astronomers, family priests and even as Commanders of forces. Besides the Brahmins the crown prince and other princes, the ministers, commanders, lieutenants, commandos, etc. occupied positions of prominence in the royal house. Like their counterparts in South India the Cheras also observed the patrilineal system of succession. The practice common among the Cheras like other kings of South India was to install the heir apparent as crown prince as is clear from the installation of Indukotha Varma as crown Prince in 944 even when Kotha Ravi Varma lived till 947. The local rulers also followed the example.

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7 These four according to *Keralolpathis* were residences of *Taliyathiris* or representatives of Nampoothiri houses of Moozhikulam, Airanikulam Iringadikoodal and Paravoor. The *Arattali* was the private temple of the Cheraman Perumals. It is contended that Anayar tali (Royal tali) in course of time became *Arattali* was the private temple of the Cheraman Perumals. It is contended that Anyar tali (Royal tali) in course of time became *Arattali*. The very origin of the word Tali in Tamil occurred during the 7th century A.D. In Kerala, this term became vogue only ater A.D. 800. The Taliyathiris or representatives of the Nampoothiri trustees of the temples of the 11th century replaced the supreme authority vested in the hands of the *Koviladhikaris*. The *Koviladhikari* occupied a position vis-a-vis the King and the local chieftain. The Tarisapalli grant was executed, Vijayaragadeva, the *Koyiladhikari* who was the son-in-law of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara and as representaive of the kings is illustrated by the instance of the appointment of Govardhana Marthanda of Venad to rule over Nanruzhainad by the Koyiladhikarikal of Bhaskara Ravi.

In the Tarisappalli Inscription, Rama Varma Thiruvadigal figures as the crown prince of Venad at the time of the Venad King Ayyanadikal. In cases where direct successors were non-existent the Kulasekharas appointed chieftains for certain regions.

The administrative machinery bore remarkable resemblance to the characteristics of feudal polity of Europe. The administration of the *nads* or provinces were entrusted in the hands of feudal chieftains called *Naduvazhis* either appointed by the king or by hereditary succession. In each *nadu* there were representative assemblies called *Nattukkoottangal* almost resembling the *Vizhayamahattaras* of Kannada region. The various inscriptions that have came to light bear various names as Venad *Munnuttuvar*, Odanadu *Munnuttuvar*, Nanruzhainadu *Munnuttuvar*, Kizhmalainadu *Munnuttuvar* etc. The *nads* divided into Desoms were under *Desavazhis* or *Vazhkai vazhis*. Their activities were said to have been regulated by local assemblies known as *Desakkootams*. The *Desoms* were subdivided into *karas* or villages where also representative of the villages resembling modern Panchayats were functioning. In towns or *Nagara*, there were special local bodies known by different names as *Arnnoottuvar* (Six Hundred), *Anjuttuvar* (Five Hundred) *Munnuttuvar* (Three Hundred) etc. The Tarisappalli inscriptions mention about the Six Hundred as the assembly of the *Kollam Nagara*. Besides there were merchant guilds known by names as *Manigramam* and the *Anchuvannam* in towns.

The counterpart of such bodies at the centre was called *Ayirathavar* or the Thousand. According to the surmise or speculation of certain scholars, these bodies were democratic popular assemblies directing and confining the exercise of the kingly powers. But the contention is unsustainable on close examination of the various inscriptions pertaining to their role in administration. The Trikkodithanam inscription of Bhaskara Ravi's fourteenth regnal year providing provision for the feeding of twenty-four persons suggests the grading of various authorities; he who interfered with the feeding and stopped it was to pay a fine of 25 *kazhanju* of gold, to the *Koyil adhikari*; 12 *kazhanju* and 5 *kanam* to the *Naduvazhi*; 6 *kazhanju* and 2½ *kanam* to the *Vazhkaivazhi* and 1 *Pon* to the Collector of annual impost. The

nature of the various assemblies lead to the conclusion that they were only hereditary caste councils dominated by the Brahmin and Nayar gentry with limited membership and powers designed to implement the central directives under the supervision of the king's agents or district governors. They manifest hereditary loyal characteristics of feudalism. The so-called representative institutions under the royal bureaucracy cannot be viewed as institutions giving expression to popular wishes, and more especially in a social set up sacrodotally dominated the Brahmins, militarily by the Brahmins, and the Nayars with economic power shared by them.

We come across the names of many dignitaries who were entrusted with the administration of the Chera kingdom such as the *Adhikari* (Executive Official) *Patanayakan* (commander-in-chief) *Kizhpatanayakan* (second-in-command) *Bhandaramkappon* (Treasurer) *Matilnayakan* (commander of the fort) *Tiyamazhvan* (Police Officer) *Tiruvaikelpan* (the writer of royal writs) etc. The epigraphical records of the time show that the king was at the head of the government with *Koyiladhikarikal*, who might in all probability be the crown prince himself *Naduvazhi*, *Vazhkaivazhi* or *Desavazhi* and the *Kolkaran* in the descending order below him.

In the realm of law and justice there was a regular penal system which prescribed specific punishments to the guilty. The offenders were punished with fines, imprisonment or death according to the gravity of the offence. The permission of the king had to be taken for trial by ordeal. The ordeal of the cobra was regarded as the most deterrent form of punishment and expressive of the divine will. The culprit had to thrust his hand into a pot containing a cobra and if the cobra did not sting him he was declared innocent. Those sentenced to imprisonment were sometimes sold into slavery. This constituted a regular source of income to the local rulers. The masters of slaves were required by law to pay *Aalkaasu* (slave tax). The summary removal from office was the punishment.

The inscriptions of this period show some idea of the revenue of the State collected by different agencies, various items of professional taxes, house tax, land-tax,tolls and customs,

protection fee, fine, etc. The king mainly derived his income from the crown lands. The land tax was called *Pattavaram*. It was 20% of the gross produce 1/10th to the *Pathi* (Desavazhi) called *Pathippathavaram* and 10th to the king known as *Koppathavaram*. The king's officers collected also from those who lived on the crown land *Talaikkanam*. Fee for every *Tala* or rope-ring which the toddy tapper and the tree climber used, *(Enikkanam)* fee for every ladder, pon in lieu of palm leaves used for thatching, poll-tax on *sanans* or toddy-tappers; *Polippon* a gold coin before measuring the newly threshed paddy; *Iravucchoru*, food for the king's servants when they had to stay for the night, *Kutanazhi*, a Nazhi, or small measure, for every *Kutam*, or big pot, of oils and toddy. *Talaivilai*, a tax on male slaves and *Mulaivilai*, a tax on female slaves when bought and sold, *Arupatalonru*, one-sixtieth of all sales and purchases; *Alkaasu*, annual poll tax on slaves; *Vavinum (generally 8 Kasu)* on every cart load, *Veti* (generally 4 *Kasu)* on *Kavu* or *Kavati* (baskets slung from the two ends of a pole carried on the shoulder), *Pateku* (generally 4 *Kasu*) on every boat-load of merchandise brought into or taken out of the towns on the royal demesne; *Koppathivaram* tax on the lands of the Naduvazhis when first leased out; *Palivaram* fee for protection according to the extent of the holding leased to the tenant, and *Katamal* or tax. Taxes called *Menipponnu* (tax levied for exercising the privilege of wearing gold ornaments) and *Polipponnu (*a kind of sales tax) were also levied The tax structure bears striking similarity to the system in the days of *Chandragupta Maurya*. There was also realisation of additional revenues from aristocratic persons with special privileges like those of putting up additional storeys or ornamental arches and gates in the houses. Tax was levied even in the cases of use of silk turbans, palanquins, procession lamps and instrumental music as status symbols. The presentation of *Kazhcha* or tribute by subordinates to the superiors on occasions of ceremonial meetings and religious and domestic celebrations was in vogue. The superior could claim from the subordinate, allegiance fealty and obligations incidental to and arising from them. Land revenue system really came into existence during this period and proprietorship of land was closely associated with political power and administration.

The Capital City

The capital city of the Kulasekharas was Mahodayapuram otherwise called *Makotai* or *Mahodayapatanam* near Cranganore. It was at the mouth of the Periyar river which may be identified with modern Thiruvanchikkulam There is reference to this town is *Subhadra Dhananjaya, Pradyumnabhyudaya, Vijayadarsika, Sivavilasa, Sukasandesa* etc. The city had many divisions such as Kodungallur, Thiruvanchikkulam, Kottakkakom, Gotramalleswaram and Balakreedeswaram. The city was adorned by wide streets, beautiful mansions, places and towers and surrounded by big fortresses Gotramalleswaram where the great place occupied by Sthanu Ravi and other Kulesekharas stood is identified with Cheraman Parambu. It was at Mahodayapuram that the famous observatory was locatd. It was probably the first of its kind in the whole of South India. Sankaranarayana, the great astronomer and the author of the ancient astronomical work, the *Sankaranarayaneeya* was in charge of this observatory in the time of Sthanu Ravi. The science of astronomy had reached a high state of perfection during this period and the system of Arybhatta[8]

8. The following are some of the comments of modern researchers on Aryabhatta's place of birth, residence etc. The Aryabhatiya School of Astronomers is specially associated with Kerala country. Practically all the astronomers of this school whose place of origin can be definitely determined belong to this part of India. Probably Aryabhata himself was a native of Kerala. He is called *Asmaka* which is derived by commentators as belonging to the *Asmaka* country And in some quarters it is identified with the Southern part of the Kerala State. Two facts may be specially noted in support of the connection of Aryabhata with Kerala. Practically all the astronomical works produced in Kerala, whether commentatorial or original treatises, follow the Aryabhatan School; also manuscripts of the works of this school are found mostly only in this part of the country. That Bhaskara identified himself with this school is quite apparent. (Kuppanna Sastri T.S. (ed) Maha Bhaskariya, Madras Government Oriental Manuscript Series, 1957). The following passage occurs in the book 'A C_oncise History of Science in India'. Aryabhata is frequently referred to as Asmaka, that is one belonging to the Asmaka country which is the name of the country in the south, probably Kerala. His work is sometimes designated as Asmaka-sophutatantra. These findings coupled with the fact that commentaries of, and works based on, Aryabhatiya have largely came from South India, from Kerala in particular certainly constitute a strong argument in favour of Kerala being the main place of his life and activity (Bose D.M. Sen, S.N. and Subbarayappa, B.V. (Editors), 1971. New Delhi Indian National Science Academy). The surmise of the Editors of "A concise History of the Science in India" seems to be true to facts as *the meaning of*

was followed in the calculation of time. Sthanu Ravi was keenly interested in the work of the observatory.[9] The instruments used in the observatory included *Rasichakram, Jalesasutram, Shakrajalesasutram, Golayantram* and others as mentioned by

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the word "Asmakam"(അശ്മകം)is given as the name of old Travancore (see Sabdataravali, p. 185, N.B.S. Edition, Kottayam 1964). According to S.B. Dikshit (History of Indian Astronomy, Bharatiya Jyotis-sastra, Part-I, Director General of Observatories, New Delhi, 1963), the Vaishnavites were strong followers of Aryabhatas teachings and they were widely accepted in South India especially in Kerala and not in Bengal or Patna and so Kusumapuram must have been a place in South India. Dr. C.N. Srinivasiengar (The History of Ancient Indian Mathematics, World Press, Calcutta, 1967, p.41) H. Jern (Aryabhatyam with the commentory Bhata-Dipika of Paramadisvara, Leiden, 1847)-he has collected three manuscripts of Aryabhatiyam in Malayalam script: "the one copied from an *Ola* manuscript in the Chirakkal Raja's Library written by Unni Panikker at Calicut 1863) and K.V. Sarma (A History of the Kerala School of Hindu Astronomy, p.6, 1972, Vishveshvaranand Institute, Hoshiarpur) all over that Aryabhata belonged to Kerala. The fact that Aryabhata has dated the year of composition of Aryabhatiyam in the *Kali* era and that only *Kali* era was in common use in Kerala unlike the *Vikram* era and *Saka* era elsewhere in India leads to the conclusion that Aryabhata hailed from Kerala. "The name of the author of Aryabhatiyam was Arya and that he was a Bhattathiripad (of Kerala) or a Bhattacharya (of Bengal)-both of which can be abbreviated as Bhatta-may look reasonable" (Rama Varma Tampuran and Akhileswara Iyer A.R. (ed) Yakti Bhasa Part I, (Malayalam) 1948), Mangalodayam, Trichur) Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, (Kerala Sahitya Charithram, Vol. I, p.165, 1957) states that in A.D. 682, the Kerala astronomers assembled at Tirunavai and revised the *Parahita Ganita* of Aryabhata. There is a fairy-tale-like legend in Kerala to the effect that to know the result one has to go to Pazhoor Mana *(Bhalam Ariyan Pazhurpadi Varai Pokanam)*. Is Aryabhatya, a Scion of the renamed Talakulathu Bhattathiri, the author of *Dasadhavayi* and *Muhurta Ratna* and *Sputanirnayathanthra vivrthi*. Since all authorities agree that Aryabhata was born in Asmakajanapadam *(Asmakajanapadajata Aryabhatacarya* Nilakanda's commentary on Aryabhatiyam) and later migrated to Kusumapuram (Pataliputra, modern patna) or Sanskritised form of Poompattinam of Sangam (Kavaripoompattinam) age, it seems possible that Aryabhata was born in Travancore (the meaning given in Sabdataravali for the word Asmakam quoted above) and later migrated to Kaveripoompattinam of Sangam (4th century B.C. to 5th century A.D.) celebrity. Further Bhaskaracharya also refer to Aryabhata as Asmaka and to his Aryabhatiyam as *Asmaka-tantra and Asmakiya-sastra*. For details, refer article on Aryabhata by Dr. S. Parameswaran (Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. VIII, 1981, p. 69 to 92).

9. For reference, See Sankaranarayana's Commentary *(Vivarana)* on Laghubhaskariya, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, p. 162.

Sankaranarayana. Ravi Varma Kulasekhara installed some new instruments in the observatory and they were together called Ravi Varma Yantra Valayam[10]. There were arrangements to intimate the correct time to the people by tolling bells from various spots in the town. This practice was known as *Nazhikaikottu* because the bells sounded at every *Nazhikai* or *Ghatika* (24 minutes)[11] Sankaranarayana belonged to Aryabhata School of astronomers and probably the observatory at Mahodayapuram might have been modelled on the astronomical observatory in the famous University of Nalanda where Aryabhata was *Kulapathi* or Head.

Progress of Trade

During the time of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram there was a flourishing sea trade with the Arab kingdom of Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, Constantinople, Bagdad, China, Sumatra. Jawa and other foreign countries. The Chera-Chola conflict seldom impeded the trade. This is borne by the discovery of Roman and other foreign coins in different parts of Kerala and the statements of travellers like Sulaiman, Masudi Abuzaid, etc. and from inscriptions like Tarisapally. The famous ports like Vizhinjam, Kanthalur, Kollam and Kodungalloor were the ports-of-call for merchant ships plying between the East and the West. The local merchants engaged in the foreign trade were organised into guilds and they wielded considerable political influence with the rulers by aiding them with money, ships and even soldiers in times of need. They were to a large extent organised as religious communities with separate guilds of Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Jewish merchants. Association of merchants like *Valanchiyar, Manigramam, Anchuvannam, Pattanaswamikal, Nanadesikal* etc. are found in the records of the time. The Tarisappalli inscriptions show that merchant guilds like the *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam* were given prominent positions in matters of administration. The responsibility for the defence and the security of Quilon was

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10. *Golamahodayapurai Ravi Varma Deva Sambhandha Yantra Valyankintha rasichakral.*

11. ......*Samamandala rutasurvaihavavasal Kathaya Shakrajalesasutram.*

vested in the *Arunoottuvar* (Six Hundred) of the town as well as in *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam*. They also had the responsibility of safeguarding the Tarisapally and its properties. These associations posessed the power to settle disputes concerning the commerce of the church and to stamp the goods after collection of customs and duties. The *Manigramam* of Quilon had to collect the *Pativaram* or payments dueto the local chiefs, their headmen could suspend the trade of the town, and their decisions alone were deemed valid.[12] The kings and chieftains conferred honours and special concession to foreign merchant associations. When the security of Kerala was thretened by the invasion of Raja Raja, foreign merchant associations under the leadership of Joseph Rabban played an active part in the defence of the country. The *Valanchiyar* of the 18 countries [13] who were to supervise along with the Six Hundred, the administration of the temple of *Vellani* from A. D. 1195 onwards probably the same as the *Patinettu Nattar* of the 18 countries of the Tali inscription of Indu Kothai's 17th regnal year.[14] The *Valanchiyar* might probably have been merchants engaged in trade with countries beyond the sea. It could have been a local organisation like the *Iruvar* of Tirupuramviyam and tho *Valanchiyar* of Tirunelveli.[15] The *Valanchiyar* as the name suggests were sea-farers. The *Payyannur Pattu* refers to Pattanaswami. The Pattanaswami might have belonged to the *Nanadesiyattisaiayirattaiyinurruvar* or 1500, perhaps the greatest commercial union having 1500 families on its fold as members with representatives in all parts of India and the nearest and the far East including the Asiatic Archipelago and Strirajya in China. They traded not only in elephants and horses but also in everything from precious stones, perfumes, spices and drugs, down to salt, wholesale and retail, hawking them about on their shoulders or conveyed them on the back of horses, asses and buffaloes with 500 *veerasasanas* constituting perhaps

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12 T.A.S. Vol. II, p. 82.

13. T.A.S. Vol. III, pp. 33-37.

14. T.A.S. Vol. VIII, p. 45.

15 The Colas, op. cit. p. 498 and 548.

Veerapatanas of the same number each with a Pattanaswami at the head guarded and protected by their own soldiers.[16] The Nanadesis visited all countries in the course of their trade and everywhere they enjoyed a respected and privileged position. In the 13th century there was at Pagan in Burma, a Vishnu temple built by *Nanadesis* and gifts were made to it by a merchant from one of the port towns on the Malabar coast.[17] The *Nanadesis* are identified with the *Chettis* by some authors. This shows that Kerala carried on a flourishing commerce with China. The chief articles of merchandise consisted of "goods that carried great value for small bulk." About the imports to Siraf, the Arab writer, Istakhri (tenth century) says: "The imports are all aloes wood (for burning), amber, camphor, precious gems, bamboos, ivory, ebony, sandalwood and all kinds of Indian perfumes, drugs and condiments." The high value of the jewels and semi-precious substances such as ivory, ebony, amber, coral and the like and the increasing demand for them led the Chinese Government to declare their sale a government monopoly. The government appointed licensed vendors to buy their supplies at government rates and prices fixed by government. However with the influx of time, grave abuses developed with regard to the trade in luxuries that forced government to legislate prohibiting the exportation of precious metals and coined money and to restrict the volume of trade with Malabar and *Kulam*(Quilon). But the commercial relations were not estranged till the end of the 13th century. Hindu sculptures of South India have been discovered in a Chinese temple in the port town of Chou near Taiwan and these sculptures represent themes like the *Gajendra-moksha*.It is said that a colony of South Indian merchants had settled in the town. In the lists of the products of the Chola country given by Chau-Ju-Kua,[18] the peculiar Kerala products like elphant's tusks, betelnuts, cardamom etc. find a place. The account probably relates to the period of Chola ascendency in Kerala and have litle connection with the Chola Kingdom and the same is the reason that may be attached to the description of Ma'bar

16. The Colas, op.cit. p. 599.

17. Ibid., p. 597.

18. Quoted in the Colas, op.cit. p. 606.

given by Marco Polo. Benjamin of Tudela[19] lays down that *Chulam* (Quilon) was seventeen days by sea from Kish. Of the people of this place, their government and country Benjamin states: "They are descendants of Phush, are addicted to astrology and are all black. This nation is very trustworthy in matters of trade, and whenever foreign merchants enter their port, three secretaries of the king immediately repair on board the vessels write down their names and report them to him: the king thereupon grants them security for their property, which they may even leave in the open fields, without any guard. One of the king's officers sits in the market, and receives goods that may have been found anywhere, and which he returns to those applicants who can minutely describe them. The custom is observed in the whole empire of the king. Regarding the hours of business, Benjamin also says : "From Easter to New Year (from April to October), during the whole of the summer, the heat is extreme. From the third hour of the day (nine O'clock in the morning) people shut themselves up in their houses until the evening at which time everybody goes out. The streets and markets are lighted up and the inhabitants employ all the night upon their business which they are prevented from doing in the day time, in consequence of excessive heat".

The above foreign sources quoted sufficiently justifies that foreign trade played a vital part in the economy of the Kerala life of the period.

Kerala ocupied a key-position in the Arab trade also. There are varied references to chettis dealing in horses. As the chettis are often said to come from Malainadu, it is reasonable to infer that Arabia supplied the horses used by kings and chieftains in war.[20] Al Idrisi (1101—1154) was the first to refer to Kerala as Manibar, Malibar, Ma'bar.[21] The Jews were the great importers and exporters of this period. "They travel" says Ibn Kurdadbeh in his book of Routes and Kingdoms "from

19. R.H. Major: India in the Fifteenth Century, p. 96.

20. The Colas, op. cit. p. 607.

21. S.M.H. Nainar, Arab Geographers knowledge of South India, pp. 18-19.

the West to the East and from the East to the West now by sea. They take from the West eunuchs, female slaves, boys, silks, furs, and swords. On their return, they bring musk, aloes, camphor, cinnamon and other products of the eastern products."[22] Even though large numbers of them lived at Eli (near Madayi) Panthalayani Palayur (near Chavakkad) their chief centres were Kodungallur and Kollam. Their corporations were known as *Anchuvannam* and their headmen at Kodungallur and Kollam enjoyed considerable powers and privileges. It was in recognition of their financial and other contributions for defence in the Chola Chera conflict that induced Bhaskara Ravi Varman to confer on their leader Joseph Rabban all the honours and insignia of the local nobility and perhaps even of the princes of the royal blood. In addition to the exemption from taxes and dues 72 aristrocratic privileges including the right to sound war drums and bugles, construct gateways with arches, carry weapons and ornamental lamps in procession and the use of the palanquin. They enjoyed the prerogatives in hereditary succession like other potentates of the Chera kingdom. In the Jewish Copper Plate, it has been specified that sons as well as nephews could inherit their title to *Anchuvannam*, thus leaving them the option of adopting either patrilineal or matrilineal form of inheritance. Historians view this as an index of the localisation of external elements by the Cheras and the toleration enjoyed by foreigners at the hands of the Cheras.

The Kulasekharas maintained a well-organised navy noted for its excellent performances during expeditions. That the people of Kerala were expert navigators is testified by the Tiruvilangad plates and literary works. There were different types of boats and ships known by different names like the *vallam, thoni, odam, marakkalam, kappal, vanchi,* and *pattemari* all constructed and used in Kerala.

Origin of Malayalam[23]

It was during this epoch in Kerala's past that Malayalam language began to show its individual characteristics. As a

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22. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri-Foreign notices of South India, p. 21.

23. See Appendix IV at the end of the Chapter for details

dialect of Tamil. It became recognisable as a separate language from about 750 A. D. In the dated inscriptional evidence of this period, we come across the evolution of *Vattezhuthu* and its prevalence till the 18th century. The transformation of the language was par *exemple* the impact of the spoken language of the Brahmin immigrants on Tamil. The word *Vattezhuthu* is sometimes explained as the union of two words, *Vata*, and *Eluthu* meaning of northern script, thereby indicating the combined influence of Asokan Brahmi and Tamil Brahmi.

Contribution to Literature

The Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram were not only patrons of literature, they themselves were well accomplished scholars who made substantial original contribution to Sanskrit and Tamil literature. The scholarship of Kerala scholars like *Bhavaratan* and *Matrudattan* established close association with Dandi is clear from Dandi's *Avanti Sundari*. It is said that Bhavaratan wrote a commentary on *Kalpasutra* and *Matrudattan* wrote commentaries on *Grihya Sutra* and *Srautha Sutra*. The great Meemamsa is claimed by tradition to have been writen by a son of Kerala. Kulasekhara Alwar, one of the greatest Vaishnava Saint of South India wrote the *Perumal Tirumozhi* in Tamil and *Mukuntamala*[24] a short devotional lyric in Sanskrit.[25] Kulasekhara Varma who, whether he was Kulasekhara Alwar himself or not, was another scion of the Kulasekharas who wrote three Sanskrit dramas of renown, the *Tapathi Samvarana*, *Vischinnabhisheka* and *Subhadra Dhananjaya* and of a prose work *Ascharyamanjeri*.[26]

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24. Two Sanskrit commentaries on Mukuntamala are known. The *Tatparyadipika* by Raghavanandan and another by (1) *Tiruvenkatasura*. *Raghavananda in his explanation blends the Advaitic system of metaphysics with the Bhakti cult making* Vishnu, the *Sagunabrahman* (for details see Kerala's contribution to Sanskrit Literature, K. Kunjunni Raja, Madras, 1958, p. 67).

25. The date and identification of Kulasekhara Alwar have already been discussed. Kulasekhara Varman (800—820 A.D) founder of the Chera kingdom under the Kulasekharas at Mahodayapuram is none else than this reputed author.

26. A Brahmin contemporary of Kulasekhara Varma in his *Vyanagyavakhya* speaks of these two dramas. There is a long introductory portion to the

Sankaracharya's theological dissertations and hymns made a valuable contribution to Sanskrit literature. His *Vishnupadadi-kesastotra*, his commentary on *Brahmasutras*, *Bhagavatgita* and the principal *upanishads*, his philosophical poems like the *Vivekachudamani*, the *Upadesasahasri*, the *Atmabodha* and the *Mohamudgara*, *stotra works* like *Sivanandalahari* and *Saundarya-lahari*, all bear the imprint of a remarkable devotional poet as well as perceptive commentator of the classic religious texts of Hinduism and as propounder of the doctrines of Advaita Vedanta. Sakthibhadra,[27] the renowned author of the great Sanskrit drama *Ascharyachudamani* lived during this period. The *Sankaranarayaneeya*, Yamaka poet Vasubhattathiri's *Yudhistira Vijaya*, *Tripuradahana* and *Sourikathodaya*, Ravideva's *Nalodaya* and other poems, the work of the great humorist Tolan etc. appeared during this period. Tolan is famous in tradition as the friend and adviser of the royal dramatist Kulasekhara. He is sometimes identified with Atula (Sanskritised name of Tolan) the author of the historical Mahakavya, the *Musakavamsa* and sometimes with the author of the Vyangya Vyakya. It is said that Tolan reformed the Kerala Stage and adapted many of the

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commentary on the *Subhadradhananjaya*, where he gives a detailed description of the circumstances that led to his writing the commentaries. The house of the commentator was situated at Paramesvaramangalam on the banks of the river Curni (Periyar). One morning a messenger from the Emperor came to his house and informed him that the Emperor wanted to see him. A country boat with all amenities was ready for his journey. The Brahmin scholar reached Mahodayapuram and met Kulasekhara sitting on a throne in the court hall. At this stage in the course of his narrative, the commentator gives a long description of the Emperor, which may be compared with the description of the Emperor, given by the poet himself in the *Tapatisamvarana*. Kulasekhara welcomed him warmly, and taking him to his private chamber, told him that he had composed two dramas, the *Samvarana* and the *Dhananjaya*, following the Dhvani school. Kulasekhara wanted to know whether the Brahmin scholar approved them or not. The Emperor told him that if they were good, he himself would explain to him how they were to be represented, and later got them staged by actors. The Brahmin scholar wrote the commentaries on the basis of the explanation given by the author himself. In the commentary on the *Tapatisamvarana* also, he says that he has been able to give the author's own ideas, since the king himself took the role of each character and explained to him how the representation ought to be made.

27. See Appendix V

famous Sanskrit dramas to this reformed theatre. He composed several humorous verses in Malayalam to be used by the *Vidhushaka* while staging the Sanskrit drama.

To the early 7th century belongs the great Tamil classic *Silappadhikaram* (Epic of Anklets) which was written by a Chera prince who was the younger brother of the ruler, Cheran Senguttuvan. This epic begins with the evocative picture Kaveri-Pattanam, the Chola capital, as the backdrop of the narration, moves on to Madura, the Pandyan capital and terminates in Vanchi, the capital of the Cheras. The Culture of the Three Monarchs *(Moovarasar)* is depicted with extraordinary grandeur in this classic. The author seems to have been an ardent follower of Jainism. The epic reflects an ideal religious harmony where members of the same family could pursue different religious faiths. The way of life pictured in the epic remains appropriate even to this day. The song of the harvesters, the humming in the hives of wild bees, the shouts of the hunters, the gifts of forest like ivory, sandalwood, cardamom, elephants, tigers and lions and the gifts of the farms as rice, millets, grains, coconuts, fruits and flowers, the caste of professional dancers, the Chakkiars, chiefs of the tribes and their folk dances, the king born in the Immortal Chera line wearing the garland of suzerainty, the kings council and the five assemblies, the sunlit terrace and the loopholed towers looking out over the harbour, all present the most complete picture of Kerala before the influx of Brahmins into this part of India wrought profound changes in the class structure which ensued. It is indeed an epic blending contemporary history with romantic tragedy that finds few parallels in literature.

Decline of Buddhism and Jainism

An important development of the period was that Buddhism and Jainism descended socially and sacradotally. Jainism and Buddhism had spread to Kerala very early and had enjoyed high prestige till the late 7th century when the social history turned turbid with the conflict they had to face with the Hindu revivalist movements that came as an aftermath of the slow and steady Aryanization. The Inscriptional evidence of the early years of

the Kollam Era (9th century A. D.) makes it clear that these two religions began to wane in Kerala and by the end of the 12th century the eclipse was almost practically total. There are many references to ruined Buddhist *chaityas*. All Non-Vedic places of worship of the Budhists known as Pallis were converted into Hindu places of worship. According to tradition, a large number of Bhatta Brahmins entered Kerala in the 7th and 8th century through the Tulu country and their ideology and administrative system found favour with the kings and chieftains of the period. It is said that Sambandar who got the milk of divine knowledge from the Goddess Parvathy and became a poet at the age of three converted the Pandya king to Saivism and made him a Kshatriya. On that day 8000 Jains were put to death by impalement to honour the great sage. The *Bhagavadajjuka* of Bodhayana, *Mattavilasa* of Mahendra Varma and the *Dasakumaracharita* of Dandi gained great popularity in Kerala. Alongside the theological dissertations of Sankaracharya on monism around 800 A. D., the efforts of the Alwars and Nainars, the quick progress in the construction of temples and the propagation of Aryan faith in the temples must have paved the way for the downfall of the two religions. Kulasekhara who wrote devotional poems in Sanskrit and Tamil was one of the famous Vaishnavite Saints (Alwars) and his successor Rajasekhara one of the great Saivite Saints (Nayanars) of South India. But a change sems to have come towards the close of the 8th century. During the reign of Kulasekhara Alwar, he made liberal grants of land and money to the existent Buddhist and Jain temples. In the temples of the Hindus, the idols of Buddha or Ayyappan were installed outside the main temple. The installation of the Ayyappa image outside the main temple probably suggests that the followers of the two faiths were looked down as lower clases enjoying only inferior status in the social ladder

Though Buddhism and Jainism were on the decline after the advent of the Cholas in the political arena of South India, their religions did not entirely pass into oblivion. The condition of Buddhism and Jainism in the Sangam epoch was a dominating

phenomena. Also later works like *Silappadhikaram*[28] and *Manimekhalai* vouch for the popularity of these religions. *Manimekhalai* refers to a large Chaittana in Kaveripoompattinam and the *Chakravalakkottam*, a Buddhist temple near the burial ground. There was also a small Buddhist temple called *Kuchcharakkudigal* which is stated to have enshrined the *sampapati*.[29] The temples of *sattan* and *Pasandasattan*[30] found in the outskirts of Kaveripoompattanam were in all probability Buddhist temples. The word *Sattan* is derived from *Sasta* which was once associated with the Buddha. *Aiyanar* or *Aiyappan* is most probably an equivalent of Sasta. The temples of Sasta, Aiyanar or Aiyappan are common in Kerala and Tamilnadu and they presumably refer to Buddhist temples at one time. The

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28. There are casual references about the popularity of Buddhism in Chera country in this work. It is said that the author of Silappadhikaram was neither a Jain nor a Brahmin but only an eclectic in religion. The work adumbrates the description of the consecration of Pattini image at Vanchi during which ceremony the ardent Buddhist king Gajabahu of Ceylon was present. The *Patikam* in Silappadhikaram is said to have been composed by Ilango Adikal, the younger brother of Senguttuvan who had taken up residence at Kunavayil Kottam of Tirukkunavayil identified by scholars as Trikkanamathilakam, five miles to the north of Kodungallur. This place was the seat of a Jain monastry. The name of Trikkunavay is mentioned in a *Vattezhuthu* inscription of the Tiruvannur temple within the Calicut city precincts. That Tirukkunavay was a Jain temple is also proved from the fragmentary *Vattezhuthu* inscription discovered by the Kerala State Department of Archaeology in 1960 from *Chakkyar Tottam* or *Kundam* on a hillock known as Pallikunnu. This inscription records an agreement by *Nalppattennayiravar* (forty eight thousand). the two *Pattakal* (Bhattar or scholars, the Adhikarar (Officers) of Tirukkunavay etc. regarding the *Pallikal* (non-Hindu temples) of *Valanchiyar* and their property and that those who committed an offence against the agreement shall be deemed as offenders against the deity of Tirukkunavay. M.G.S. Narayanan fixes the date of the construction of Tirukkunavay at the beginning of the 8th century on the basis of an inscription discovered from the neighbourhood of an ancient Jain Basati at Talakkavu near Putadi in Wynad taluk. (For details, See Re-interpretations in South Indian History, op.cit. pp. 66-75).

29. Manimekhala XVIII-145. It was also known as *Mudiyalkottam*. *Sampapati* was considered the tutelar deity of the Buddhists at Kaviripoompattinam.

30. Silappadhikaram IX: 15: 23 *Pasandam* was a common term applied to logicians of ninety-six varieties of Buddhist of faith. *Pasanda Sastra* belonged to one category of defied Buddha.

most famous of these Sasta temples are those of Achankoil, Ariyankavu and Sabarimalai.[31] The word Sas means "to command, rule, protect, guard" etc. In this sense Sasta[32] can be applied to any deity whose function is to protect, guard or instruct.

The tradition in the Keralolpathi mentions of a Bana Prumal who became a Baudha and abdicated the throne. The *Keralolpathi* lays down the period 305–317 A. D. as the reign of Bana Perumal. It is very difficult to identify this king with any of the Perumals in the post–Sangam epoch mentioned in the *Keralolpathi* as the dates given in it are entirely fictitious.[33] The Hindu temples at Nilamperoor (Kuttanad Taluk) and Kiliroor (Kottayam) are closely associated with the Palli-Bana Perumal. The temple at Nilamperoor is even now called *Palli Bhagavati* temple. The palace where the temple is situated is known as

31. See Foot-note 92.

32. There is a very large section of scholars who believe in the truth of the legendary Cheraman Perumal as having embraced Buddhism and therefore constrained to leave the country for fear of Aryan vengeance. It is said that he came under the influence of the Buddhist monks disseminating Buddhist doctrines with their centre at Sree Mulavasa. And the probability of this tradition lays strong stress in the well established historical truth that Sree Mulavasam of hoary past celebrity which had been submerged under water in course of time had been located in the Alleppey District.

33. The following is a good description of Sasta who is known by other names as Sattan, Aiyan, Aiyappan, Hariharaputra. "The chief male deity among the Grama-devatas is Aiyar or Aiyanar. He is also named Hariharaputra (i.e.) Vishnu-Siva's son because he is said to owe his origin to the union of Siva and Vishnu when the latter took the female form called Mohini. Aiyanar is represented by a human form in a sitting posture with a red skin, a crown on his head and pearls in his locks. On his forehead he wears the sacred ashes, pearls on his ears and neck and a sort of ribbon on his breast. The arms, hands, feet and the whole body are full of jewels and ornaments. In his right hand he holds a sceptre to indicate that he is the chief among the village gods. Round his body and his left leg he wears a kind of belt called Bahupaddi which is also

Pallimoottikkal. The accountant of the temple is known as *Palli Menon*. The term Palli denoted non-vedic places of worship in those days. There are many place names in Kerala beginning with or ending with *Palli*. The Perumal is said to have stayed for some time at Killroor, a place two miles west of Kottayam town where there is a Bhagavathy temple on the top of a small hill. On the left side of the main shrine in this temple, there are two Buddhist images housed in a tiled shed. In front of the room of this shed, there is a bronze image of the Buddha in the characteristic Yogic pose under a *Bodhi* tree,[34] and another similar image embossed on a wall below which is inscribed

South Travancore in the erstwhile Travancore State seems to have been a strong-hold of Buddhism even in late 9th century A.D. notwithstanding the fact that the popularity of the faith was on the wane elsewhere in South India during this period. A Buddhist inscription, in the Parthivasekharapuram temple of the Ay king Varaguna came to light which unequivocally relates

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used by sages and others when they sit. From his shoulders garlands hang down. The upper part of his body is uncovered whilst the lower is covered with a motley garment. Aiyanar's two wives Puranai (on the right) and Putkalai (on the left) are represented as having natural bodies of a yellow colour with crowns on their heads and flowers in their hands. Puranai wears on her forehead the mark of musk (Kasturi) and Putkalai the sacred ashes. The temples of Aiyanar stand usually at some distance west of villages in a grove. Close by the temple on both sides of it are figures of clay among which are Aiyanar's generals called *Palaiyakkar*. Aiyanar is never asked for any positive good.He only protects from harm and his worhsip consists solely in propitiation. Like Ganesa and Skanda, the popular deity Aiyanar is a lord and leader of demn host and his province is to guard the fields, crops and herds of the peasantry and to drive away their enemies. Accordingly outside every village in Southern India may be seen shrines of Aiyanar surrounded by rude clay or terracotta figures of horses and other animals of life size on which he is supposed to ride when keeping guard. His image is roughly curved sometimes in a sitting posture and at other time on horse back. When properly represented he ought to have a crown on his head the Siva mark on his forehead, a sceptre in his hand and ornament on his person".
S.I.I. Vol.II. p.40.

34. Buddhism in Kerala. P. C. Alexander. Annamalai University. 1949. pp. 60—62

to the prevalence of the Buddhist religion. In this inscription found in the house of the Paliathu Achan and translated and edited by Gopinatha Rao[35] Varaguna calls himself and his subjects as worshippers of the Buddha and prays to him for grant of prosperity to them. On a close examination of this inscription with the Travancore Huzur Office Plate No. II.[36] the king mentioned in the inscription is identified as Vikramaditya Varaguna, the immediate successor of Ko-karunandadakkan. The inscription also makes it clear that Varaguna and his followers belong to the Hinayanist (the mention of *Trisarana (Buddha, Dharma* and *Sangha)* order. Varaguna also granted extensive landed properties to the celebrated Buddhist temple at Tirumulapadam (Trikkunnapuzha in Sree Mulavanam). The temple was situated in the Chera Kingdom while the land donated was in the Ay Kingdom. The land was placed under the protection of one Vira Kotha "on whose breast Lakshmi enamoured of victory is sleeping with her arm for a pillow." Elamkulam identifies Virakotha with Indukotha Varma who was Elaya Raja (crown prince) of Chera dynasty. It may be recalled here that though Ay Kings were devout Hindus, they made liberal grants to Buddhist and Jain temples. The artistically exquisite image of Buddha discovered from Mavelikara town and installed in front of the Sri Krishnaswamy temple is nearly 2½ feet in height depicted in the *Dhyanamudrai* posture with the hands resting in the lap and the back of the right hand lying in the palm of the left. Another image closely resembling the Buddha in the meditative posture — the only difference perhaps is the gentle smile on the lips — with the *Ushnisha* and the *Jwala* on the head and upper cloth passing over the left shoulder and lying flat on the chest has been discovered from Bharanikavu, a village lying five miles south of Mavelikkara town. Yet another image from the nearby region is from Pallikkal, seven miles from Adoor town in Adoor Taluk This is a headless image - later improvised a new head by the Travancore Museum authorities now kept in the Trivandrum Museum Archaeological section is in the *Padmasana* pose and the petals of lotus are sculptured in

35. T. A. S. No. XII, 1912, L. D. Swamikannu Pillai fixes the date of the inscription as Thursday, December 30, 868.

36. Archaeological Survey of Travancore, Annual Report (K. E. 1094 1918– 1919)

the low relief (both the *Adhahpadma* and the *Urdhavapadma)* and the costume worn by the image shown running over the two ankles, the chest and the shoulder.[37] The image popularly known as *Pallikkal Puthrachen* which term is interpreted as a corruption of *Buddhar Achen* [38] or the great Buddha priest.

Another archaeological relic from this region is a granite image of Buddha discovered from a tank in the village called Maruthurkulangara in Karunagappally Taluk and exhibited on the right side of the main road at Karunagappally. Another relic in the chain is the one discovered by the author along with the Director of Archaeology from the Thazhom Village of Kulakkada in Kottarakkara Taluk of the Quilon District. It is harrowing to note that this exquisite image of Buddha was left neglected in a plot known as *Thevarukunnil Purayidom* in the midst of a small shrubby bush about one and a half furlongs east of the banks of the Kallada river. It is very elegantly executed and is in an excellent state of preservation than the two images discovered from nearby taluks. It is about 3 feet in height and seated in the Padmasana pose. Its right hand is broken. The remnants of a temple are also seen in the northern corner of this plot where the image lay. The image now forms part of the archaeological monuments exhibited in the Krishnapuram Palace, Kayamkulam under the Kerala State Department of Archaeology. This place in Kottarakkara taluk falls within half a minute of the latitude and longitude of the earth where the other two images of Buddha (Pallickal and Maruthoorkulangara) were also discovered; all in the belt which comes within the famous Buddhist Vihara of *Sreemoolavasam.* The temple at Sasthamcotta was originally a Buddhist Vihara. Needless to say that Quilon District was one of the areas where Buddhism exercised a potent influence on the lives of the people at an early period of its history. The stone image of Buddha in the *Yogasana* posture discovered from Karumadi in

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37. T. A. S Vol. II. p 122

38. The plot of ground near the place of the discovery of this image is even now known as *Puttar kavu* and a tank nearby as *Puttar kulam*

Ambalapuzha Taluk is very famous, known among the people of Kerala as *Karumadikkuttan*. The prominent features of this idol amply representing the finest example of the 7th to 9th century sculpture are the *Ushnisha* (Top knot) and the *Jwala* (flame) on the head and the traces of the upper cloth passing over the chest.[39] Certain scholars are of the view that the *Indalayappan* (Irantalayappan)[40] images (double headed snake images) found at Uzhayakkode, Velinallur and Kadambattukonam near Chirayinkil, Kollam, Kottarakkara etc. were at one time Buddha images.

Sreemoolavasam was the most celebrated of the Buddhist shrines in Kerala. The *Mushikavamsa* and other sources refer to this *Vihara* reputed all over India. Vikramarama, a Mushika king is said to have saved the famous Buddhist temple at *Mulavasa* from the encroachment of sea. The sea began to encroach upon land and was almost submerging under it the temple of the Buddha. By throwing large blocks of stone, he

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39. According to the local tradition, the Kuttan of the Karumadi village was one of the many minor deities sent out from Chengannoor for the destruction of Devanarayana, the Brahmin King of Ambalapuzha and that presiding deity of Krishnapuram caught hold of one of them and petrified and fixed him there. Another tradition is that as the Vilwamangalathu Swamiyar was passing along, a Pulayan (the low caste man) polluted him by approaching him and the enraged sage caused him to become a stone. The image which lay deep in water for several years was set upon a masonry pedestal on dry ground by A. H. Bastow, the Chief Engineer of Travancore in 1918. The local people mainly the lower orders propitiate the image by offerings whenever their cattle or children fell ill. The practice to a certain extent testifies to the fact that with the growth of Brahminical religion, the followers of the Buddhist were looked down by them as low castes and their deities were looked down as demons. There is some truth in the assertion of Dr. A. Aiyappan that with the revival of Brahmanism, the gods of the low castes were transformed into demons. Buddha was also the transformed as the demon Chattan. The decline of the heretical religion paved the way for the worship of demon gods like Chattan etc. by the low castes.

40. The derivation of the word is from *Iran* . *Tala* (Irattatala) which in course of time became *Indala*. The images of these temples might have been of snakes with double-hoods (Iratta) a certain Viper (See Gundert Nighantu, op. cit. p. 127.) It may be recalled here that Buddhist in and outside Kerala (Burma , Malaya, etc.) have been snake worshippers for ages.

strengthened the shore and saved the temple from destruction. This temple is said to have been that of Buddha at Sreemulavasa which was visited by Valabha, the nephew of Gambira, while on his way back to his capital from a campaign in the South against the Cholas. The temple is referred to as "The rich and flourishing temple of Sugatha (Buddha) at the holy and righteous town of *Mulavasa*". Monsieur Foucher discovered an image of Lokeswara at Gandhara bearing the inscription *Dakshinapatha Mulavasa Lokanatha*. The Paliyam Copper Plate of the Ay king Varaguna shows that he donated considerable land in South Travancore to Sreemoolavasam Buddhist shrine. The inscription gives the name of the donee of the grant as *Bhattaraka* of Tirumulapadam.[41] Gopinatha Rao is of the view that Tirumulapadam was situated on the sea-coast somewhere in Central Travancore, near Tirukkunnapuzha. From an inscription in the Vishnu temple near the temple of Sastha at Trikkunnapuzha, it is learnt that the structure of the temple originally stood on the sea-coast and that finding it in danger of being washed away by sea an ancestor of Idappalli Raja dismantled it and reconstructed it in the place where it is now found.[42] The Raja referred to is Valabha, who on his way back worshipped at the temple of Sreemoolavasam after helping the Chera ruler in his war against the Cholas in South Travancore. Probably the shrine was swallowed by the sea and subsequently the images of Buddha recovered. The image of the deity in the Sastha Kovil at Trikkunnapuzha is apparently one such

According to some writers, Sreemoolavasam was situated in Pallikkunnu Viharadurga (Cannanore district). This is on the basis of a verse in Canto XII of the *Mushakavamsa*, wherein it is stated that the king Vikramarama of the Mushaka country protected the Vihara from the encroachments of the sea, as if it was within his country. They claim that it was situated in Malabar, probably between Cranganore and Pallikkunnu.[43] The Mushika kingdom is identified with the Kolattunad territory and

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41 T. A. S. Vol. I, p 189
42. T. A. S. Vol II, p 117
43. The contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature op. cit p 57 Also Buddhism in Kerala, op. cit pp. 81 – 86

the kings of Kolattunad such as Vikramarama and Valabha patronised Buddhism. The *Kavya* lays down that the Mushika kings patronised shrines of Siva, Vishnu and the Buddha and that religions with opposed doctrines flourished harmoniously in the Mushika country.[44] P. C. Alexander infers that the "Buddhist Vihara spoken of in an old Malayalam poem as having existed at the place (Madavi or Madai in the country of Eli)" by Colonel Yule might be a reference to the famous Buddhist temple of Srimoolavamsam.[45] But the multiplicity of the Buddha images and other relics discovered from the area in and around the region (including the famous *Karumadikkuttan*), between Trikkunnapuzha and Karumadi, it may be historically true to locate Sreemoolavasam in this geographical belt Mulavasam. The luxuriant coconut cultivation found in the area could be attributed to Asoka's Buddhist policy of planting trees for the benefit of the community. The sculptural details regarding the Buddha image as given in Manasara is that the image of Buddha should be sculptured either as standing or seated upon a *Simhasana* or other seats with the *Kalpaka* (coconut) always shown behind the Simhasana. Alkwasi writing, between 1263 to 1275 refers about, "the *Kulam* (Quilon) the large city in India and says that when their king dies, the people of the place chose another from Chine". This evidently signifies that there existed colonies of Chinese in *Kulam* (Quilon) and Buddhism had been a flourishing religion in that region. And this is amply corroborated by the large number of Buddhist relics found in Mavelikkara, Kunnathoor,

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44 "Just as the proverb goes that the astam of those great kings who have attained the *siddhis*, beasts naturally emenical to each other live so in harmony in the country of Mushika, religions with dreadfully opposed doctrines flourished harmoniously". Sarga, XII Ibid, p 55 *Araves* in Tamil means vitrous one and is a name of Buddha (A Comparative Grammer Caldwell, p 19)

45 Al Biruni (970 - 1039) mentions the country of Eli and says the people there were *Samanas* by which he must have meant Bauddhas But the statement of Marco polo after the lapse of three centuries that the inhabitants of the country of Eli were idolators present the overwhelming change that have taken place in the society by the complete replacement of Buddhism by Brahminism The word *Sramana* in accordance with the recognised Dravidian law of sound becomes in Tamil *Samana*, the counterpart in Pali being *Sammana*

Kottarakkara, Karunagappally and Ambalapuzha taluks, all situated in and around the old Sree Mulavasam and very near *Kulam* (Quilon). Bauddhas *Sreemoolavasam* of the hoary past celebrity had been submerged under water in course of time is also supported by the physiographical situation of the area and that sea erosion is almost an yearly natural phenomena even now in the Trikkunnapuzha and adjacent areas. That *Sree Moolavasam* was a celebrated centre of Buddhist faith is proved by the discovery of an image of Lokeswara by M. Foucher in Gandhara containing the inscription, *Dakshinapatha Moolavasa Lokanatha*. T. A. Gopinatha Rao comments on the contents of this inscription as follows: "The use of the term Dakshinapatha removes all doubt about the situation of *Sree Moolavasam*. If a duplicate of the image of Lokeswara was set up for worship even in such a distant country as Gandhara, there is not the least doubt about the great sanctity with which the original was held by the Bauddhas all over the world. The presence of such an important temple of Buddha must necessarily have induced people to erect more temples to this deity in all the adjacent parts and this might account for a number of images all of which are found practically in one place that is, near *Sree Mulavasam*."[46]

It is presumed that *Sree Moolavasam* perished in or about the first quarter of the 10th century almost at the same time that another temple of the Buddha, that is, *Chudamani Varma Vihara* came into existence on the opposite coast at Nagapattinam in almost the same latitude as *Sree Moolavasam*.

Apart from Pallikkunnu, Dharmadom (Dharmapattanam) and Madayi[47] in Cannanore District had been centres of Buddhist

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46. T. A. S. Vol. II, Part II, p.117.
47. In *Kerala Mahatmyam* there is an interesting story—A clever Buddhist woman, by name Mali, fascinated a *Rishi* and had by him a son for whom she procured the right to the crown by exchanging her infant against that born to the 11th Kolattiri king. In due time, the boy became king of Malabar and governed the country through Buddhist dignitaries, though he was also kind to the Brahmans. It further adds that the first Buddhist *Vihara* (chapel) was built by him at *Nasamipapura* (Madaya or Palayangadi). Nasanga was so powerful that even Parasu Rama, incarnation of Vishnu as he was, found it difficult to overcome him. Rama is said to have extirpated the Buddhists and lopped off the hands and feet of the king, which as soon sprouted afresh. After describing the

religion. Some of the rock-cut or laterite caves in this district might have been abodes of Buddhist monks or seats of Buddhist *Viharas* in early days. Buddhist images were discovered from Ala near Trikkanamathilakam and from Kodungalloor and Edappalli. It is claimed that one of the steps in the Muslim mosque at Kodungalloor is a remnant of a Buddha image. Buddha images are also found in the precincts of the place where the Chettuvai Christian Church now stands. It is said that the damaged walls of the Christian Churches at Chepad, Mampuzhathara, Koratty etc. are built from the remnants of the *Viharas* located in those places.[48] Edappalli was referred to as Antarakhyam Viharam[49] in Chakorasandesa kavyam of Vasudevayamakakavi.

The place names associated with *Palli* such as Karunagappalli, Karthigappalli, Parippalli, Pallippuram, Pallikkal, Chandanappalli, Anandappalli, Thottappalli, Edappalli, Vazhappalli, Perumpalli etc., must have been originally Buddhist or Jain settlements. In the *Pallis (Viharas)* the teachers of their respective faiths taught the disciples their chief doctrines with the three R's to start with. The fact that Buddhism had long and glorious innings in Kerala is borne out by the location of Trikkanamathilakam, the great Buddhist University near Kodungallur. The Vidval sabha at Mathilakam was presided over by Ilan-Ko-Adigal, the celebrated author of *Silappadhikaram* and the brother of the illustrious Chera ruler, Senkuttuvan. The heroine of *Manimekhala* who took the vows cf Buddhism came to Mathilakam to complete her studies.

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changes that Nasanga introduced into the administration of Malabar and the difficulties that Rama encountered in endeavouring to get rid of him, the Mahatmya proceeds, "The king was detained in the chase by Siva in disguise, whilst the queen fell in love with *Krodha*, the minister, and made offers to him, the flat refusal of which prompted her desire a speedy revenge. She acts all the part of Potiphar's wife. But the faithful servants, when on the point of being executed, is discovered mounted on the heavenly chariot and, parting, advises the king to go to Mecca and worship there Vishnu incarnate in all shapes (Viswarupavatara) in order to go to Vishnu's heaven. The king did so". K. P. Padmanabha Menon, History of Kerala, Vol. I, pp. 457—58.

48. Buddhism and jainism, History of Kerala, Vol. II, Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, p. 358.
49. Kerala Sahitya Charithram, Vol. II, p. 50.

Of late the inscription of the 11th century recorded on a stone balustrade and erected in the Church court-yard at Talakkattu near Irinjalakuda station in the Trichur-Ernakulam Railway line[50] has been held by researchers as belonging to Buddhists and not Christians. The *Sattan* Vanikan and Iravi *Sattan* of the *Manigramam* occuring in the inscription are Buddhists and not Christians. The words *Sattan* in the inscription is clearly a Buddhist nomenclature and also the *tatsama* of the word *sahastan* is Lord Buddha according to them. The word *Pitika*[51] in the inscription stands for *Dharma Pita* or *Dharma Asanam* of Buddha because the grant reminds one that if anybody does harm to the temple or tradesman he will be deemed to get the sin of one who murdered his own father and married his own mother.Though in T.A.S. the word *Vadukan* is employed. the term '*Vanikan*' is more appropriate as there is no meaning for the word-pair *Sattan Vadukan* whereas *Sattan Vanikan* got a definite meaning viz., Sattan who is a *Vanikan*. *This Sattan Vanikan* is to be identified with *Kulavanikan Sattan* of Madurai, the author of Manimekhala. Iravi Cottan was his companion tradesman. The king Raja Simha Perumal granted financial grants and sites for constructing prayer halls for these Buddhist tradesmen for their inimitable epic compositions. The original Buddhist *Vihara* or *Pitikai* at Talakkattu was built on the western side of the existing Hindu temple which is constructed in the Buddhist Gajaprishta style. Further the rituals of the Talakkattu Church such as Kalakettu and Kutirakettu are really Buddhist rituals. The importance of this church as a place of medical healing and its attributed powers is only a remnant of the service rendered in the Buddhist *Viharas* and *asramas* which functioned as agents of education and medical treatment. The conclusion is that when Buddhism was wiped out of Kerala and when Christians built a church at Talakkattu this inscription was removed and installed inside the church and they put forth

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50 T. A. S. Vol. VII, p. 39, No 10 of 1106 K. E.

51. The word Pitikai has got its origin from Sanskrit word *Pitam* or *Pitika* which means a sitting place. Lord Buddha used to conduct his religious discourses sitting on a Pita *Nanmanu Pita*, *Taruma Pitikai* (Manimekhalai) *Nat .Pali Pitikai kottam* Silappadhikaram.

the claim that Chattan *Vanikan* and *Iravi* Cottan were Christians[52].

The Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen Tsang's *'Travels'* makes mention of a region which he calls *Mo-lo-kuta* or *Malakuta*, the identification of which is still a subject of keen dispute among scholars. The general agreement however seems to be that *Malakuta* comprised the Pandyan kingdoms of the South and some regions of the West Coast[53]. According to Hiuen-Tsang: the people of *Malakuta* were of mixed religions and the monasteries of *Malakuta* in ruins and hundreds of Deva temples flourishing. He also noticed a large number of *Niggantas* identified by most scholars with *Digambara* Jains. The accounts prove that Buddhist faith had lost its hold on the people by the middle of the 7th century. Next to Yuan Chwaung, Chau-Ju-Kua, the Chinese Inspector of foreign trade refers to Buddhism in Kerala in his book called *Chu-fan-chi* written about 1225 A.D. describing the people as 'extremely devout Buddhists' he says that the inhabitants of *Ku-lin* or Quilon whenever they have taken a bath they anoint their bodies with Y-kin (turmeric) as they like to have their bodies gilt like that of Buddha". This assertion of Chau Ju-kua is not in conformity with the prevailing domination

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52. Talekattu Inscription of Rajasimha Perumal—A reappraisal O. Govindan' Journal of Kerala Studies, June-September, 1977, Parts II and III, pp 193—200.

53. Dr. Burnell is of the view that Malakuta was a part of the Tanjore District round about the town of Kumbhakonan while Dr. Hultsch and General Cunningham suppose that it must have included besides Malabar the whole Southern part of the Madras Presidency beyond Kaveri. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri observes· "With whatever defects of method, Cunningham must be held to have arrived at a substantially sound identification of Malayala kuta (as he renders the name) in his statement that the province of Malayakut must have included the modern districts of Tanjore and Madura on the east with Coimbatore, Cochin and Travancore on the West" (The Pandyan kingdom, Chapter V) In the times of Hiuen Tsang and of Alberuni, the synomymous terms Malakotta and Malaya seem to have included besides Malabar the whole southern part of the Madras Presidency beyond the Kavery (South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. I, Part I. p. 2. Note I) Dr. pope says "Malakuta must be Malakotta, Malainadu Malaya. Malayalam and included the whole southern part of the Madras Presidency, the Pandya and the Chera kingdoms". (Naladyar, Introduction p. X., quoted in ***Buddhism in Kerala***, p. 92).

of Brahmanism not only in Kerala but everywhere in India in the 13th century. He might have confused the Hindu forms of worship, their festivals and other ceremonies which retained many of the important Buddhist features. Further it was the serious Hindu revivalist movement at the end of the thirteenth century A.D. that completely erased the last vestiges of Buddhist influence in this part of the land.

Jainism

Dr. Burnell says "All earlier civilisation in South India, so far as it is known, is connected with the Jainas." Hiuen Tsang who visited the Telugu and Tamil countries in 639-40 A.D. observed that the inhabitants were chiefly Nirgranthas (i.e. Digambara Jainas). He mentions a few Buddhists but has not a word about Brahmins. Kumarilla Bhatta regarded South India (Dravidian) dialects as *Mlecheha* or un-Brahmanic, uncivilised languages[54]. In all probability the Jaina period extended from the 8th or 9th century A.D. to the 12th or 13th century. The *Tiruvilayadal Puranam* and the *Sthala purana* of *Madurai* mention the impalement of 8000 Jainas who had been vanquished in discussion and out done in miracles. The evidence of Jain influence in Kerala are scanty unlike the position in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The Jain works hardly mention about Kerala. A band of missionaries from Sravanabelgola might have been sent by Visakamuni to popularise Jainism. It seems likely that Jain monks from the North also travelled South.

A proper perception of the impact of Jainism in Kerala is severely handicapped by lack of details. It is possible that some of the Chera potentates were votaries of Jainism who scrupulously adhered to Jain rituals. Sangam literature cites the Chera king Perumcheral as bearing the title of *Atan*, which in all probability was a derivative of the *Prakrit* form of Sanskrit *Arhat* denoting a Jain monk[55]. This king died performing a penance commonly

54. Quoted in a Comparative Grammar, Caldwell, p. 129.
55. P. K. Gopalakrishnan, *Jainamatam Keralathil* Trivandrum, 1974, p.3.

followed by the Jain—the *Sallekhnavrata* of ending one's life sitting in posture facing the north. Sangam literature terms this practice as *Vadakkirikkal*[56]. The Pugalur inscription records the endowments of Ilamkadungo to Jain ascetics[57]. The Tirumalai Inscription of North Arcot district is yet another confirmation of Jain influence in the region. This inscription records the restoration of the decadent statues of *Yaksha* and *Yakshi* originally installed on the holy hill of Adigaman Elini of the Chera Vamsathu (the Chera dynasty) by Vidukalakiya Perumal, the son of Raja Raja and a later descendant of Elini[58]. The Sanskrit version of the inscription describes Elini as Keralabhrubhrt. The Adigamans were deemed as kinsmen of Chera rulers. Ilamko Adigal, the author of the *Silappathikaram* and a member of the Chera royalty resided at Kunavayil kottam, which according to Adiyarkkunallar was Arukankoyil—a renowned place of Jain worship.

Barring a few inscriptions in the Edakkal caves of Sultan's Battery (attributed to Kadambas and Hoysalas) not many Jain inscriptions are found in Kerala. Yet the extant inscriptions confirm the Jain influence in Kerala. The grants given to the *Sadhus* mentioned in the Tirukkakkarai inscription of Indukodaivarman are a testimony to the life of Jain monks in Kerala and the high esteem enjoyed by them[59]. Monks resided in *Chaitya* or *Vihara* known as *Kottams*. Thus we have the *Sadhus*, Devan Sattan of Attanikottam, Kandan Narayanan of Perunkottam etc. The *Yakshi* cult in the Jainism of South India was a later development. This modification in the Jain cult could be perceived in the *Yakshi* worship. In its undiluted form Jainism was exclusively a male dominated cult. *Tirthamkaras*, the Jain saints, were all males. To counteract this obvious handicap—the *Yakshi* cult was introduced. Thus *Ambika* and *Jwala Malini* worship came into vogue. These were later adapted to

56. Moralizing in Tamil poems (Sangam) and suicide by starvation *(Vattakkirikal)* mentioned by poet Pullattur Eyittiyanar) construed by modern researchers to be Jaina inspired and this is taken as proof of Jaina morality and ethics having strongly established in Tamil culture from very early times. All the Kings Mana, Burton Stein p. 8.
57. K. A. N. Sastri, A History of South India, op. cit. p. 70.
58. South Indian Inscriptions, op. cit. p. 107.
59. T. A. S., Vol. III, Part II, p. 169.

Vaishnavism. Huzur office plates mention *Mayiyakki*, and Yakshivamma of Tiruvillava temple as akin to *Yakshi* Ambika. Jain temple lands were known as *Pallichandam* (vide Pallava king Vijakala Varman's inscription of 9th century A.D). Several *Pallichandam* grants have been excavated testifying the prevalence of Jainism in Kerala.

Some of the present day temples which bear traces of Jain's influence are found in Kerala. In Mathilakam (Kunavayil-kottam) according to the Kokasandesa, a Sandesakavva of 14th century, entry of Brahmins into the temple was prohibited. In the Kudalmanikyam temple at Irinjalakuda the original deity is stated to be *Bharatesvara*. a jain saint. The Kallil temple near Perumbavur was a past stronghold of Jains with deities Parsvanatha, Mahavira, Thirthankara and Padmavati Devi. At present it is a Bhagavathi temple though jains from other places still visit this shrine. On the facade of the rock-cut cave shrine at Kallil and on the front of the overhanging rock, there is an incompletely carved figure of Mahavira Thirthankara. A very curious story current among the local people that even now heavenly sculptors visit the place every night in order to complete the image. On the rock forming the back wall of the natural cave, another image of Mahavira is seen carved in half relief. The image is seated in the usual *Yogasana* posture on a *simhasana* The figure on a lion, the totem peculiar to Thirthankara is carved in front of the middle portion of the seat over the head of the deity beneath the triple umbrella while on either side at the posterior stands in reverential posture the figure of a *Gandharva* holding a *Chauri*. The stone image of Padmavati Devi on the right is covered with a metallic mask and it is the principal deity worshipped now. On the left of Mahavira Thirthankara is situated an image of Parsvanatha Thirthankara with its back turned towards the south. It is a place of pilgrimage for the Jains even to-day.

The Ganapathivattam (the circle or range of God Ganapathi) area near Sultan's Battery, twenty one miles from Vayittiri and thirteen miles from the Mysore border was an important Jain centre. There are many Jains in and around Kalpetta, Manantavadi, and other places. The most interesting of the

temples at Sultan's Battery is the Vasti temple, an old Jain temple. Innes records in 1908 thus: "Hidden in a lantana thicket a few yards south of the 80th milestone on the Mysore road, its very existence has been forgotten for many years. The upper part has fallen down, and the rest is fast falling into ruin, several trees having forced their way between the great granite slabs of which it is built. There are no Jains now in Sultan's Battery, but there are small colonies of them at Manantoddy, Kalpetta and other places."[60] The Ganapathi temple which belonged to the Kottayam Raja was destroyed by Tipu and the idol and few stones are all that are left". Four miles south-west of Sultan's Battery on the western slopes of Edakkal Mala near the crest is an interesting natural cave or fissure in the rock. The walls of the cave are covered with rude, fanciful drawings and bear five inscriptions[61]. Inscriptions of the Kadamba and the Hoysala Ballalas who were Jains have been found here. Jainism was popular in the Wynad and Kasaragode area of the State also. There is a small colony of Jains in the Kuppathode Amsom of North Wynad. There are two old Jain *Bastis* at Bangra Manjeswar on the southern side of the Manjeswar river. Govinda Pai is of the view that the Thalangara Mosque in Kasaragode was an old Jain *Basti* later converted into a Muslim shrine. The exclusive style of the Jain temple architecture is still discernible in the Hindu temples and Muslim mosques of Malabar.[62]

There is a small Jain temple near the Basel Mission tile works which ministers to the spiritual needs of the Jains in Palghat and Mundur. It is a small rectangular building of stone with a stone roof. It contains stone images of the Achitirthankara and a flesh coloured image of Chandra Prabha (Vishnu). According to the tradition of the locality, there were two large settlements of Jains in Palghat, one at Muttupattanam which dealt in pearls and one at Machalapattanam which dealt in jewels. They were dispersed at Haider's invasion and the endowment of the Jain temple at Machalapattanam was lost.

60. District Gazetteer of Malabar, 1951, Madras, p. 505.

61. The cave has been fully described by Fawcett, R. C. Temple etc. in Indian Antiquary, XXX 409.

62. Malabar, Logan, p. 185.

The Kerala State Department of Archaeology brought to light some relics of Jainism from Chakkiartottam or Kundum on a hillock known as Pallikunnu at Kavasseri Amsom in Alathur. The derelicts of a ruined Jain temple and bems, slabs, pillars etc. are found scattered in and around this spot. The beautiful sculptures of Mahavira and a fragmentary *Vattezhuthu* inscription have also been discovered and they are exhibited in the Trichur Archaeological Museum[63]. The fragmentary inscription makes it obligatory on those who committed an offence against the agreement of the Forty Thousand *(Nalppattennairavar)* the two *Pattakal (Bhattar or scholars)* the *Adhikarar* of Tirukkunavay etc. regarding the *Pallikal* of *Valanchiyar* and their property and that those who committed an offence against the agreement shall be deemed as offenders against the deity of Tirukkunavay. The invocation of the authority of Tirukkunavay Teyar unequivocally prove that Tirukkunavay was one of the outstanding Jain temple of Kerala.

The Calicut University Department of History has discoverd an ancient Jain *Basti* at Talakkavu near Putadi in Wynad[64] The

63. "The image of Mahavira recovered from Alathur is seated in the *Paryankasana* pose on a simple but nicely finished *bhadrasana*. The figure is exceedingly graceful and the proportions are well-modelled. The face displays inner composure and self absorption. The face is round and the ears are long and extended. The shoulders are straight and sqaure and the arms and body are beautifully modelled. The usual marks of Jain sculpture are absent except the triple umbrella, nudity, long arms, youthful body and the *lanchana* of Mahavira, namely the lions. The *Gandharvas* flank the sides of the Jina. The well-modelled proportions of the body, the graceful face etc., indicate an early period probably 9th—10th century A. D. The *Gandharvas* hold the *Cauris* in their right hands and they keep the left ones akimbo. Two lions with palm upwards are carved on the sides of Mahavira. "The other sculpture is that of Parsvanatha which is also intact except for certain cracks here and there. All the *lanchanas* for the Jain figure are not seen in the sculpture. Instead of a seven or five hooded cobra above Parsvanatha, a three-headed Cobra alone is seen. He is in the kayotsarga pose. The hand and body indicate deep meditation. The face is round and the shoulders straight. The limbs are gracefully modelled and trunk is nude The other identifying marks of a Jain figure like *Srivatsava* symbol, *Yaksa* figure etc. are not seen. The *Yaksa* Dharmendra and *Yasini* Padmavati too are absent". For details see Re-interpretations in South Indian History, op. citt. pp. 66—82.

64. Ibid, p.69—70.

date of the establishment of the Jaina Vihara of Tirukkunavay is recorded in this inscription as *muttu aimappattashu* (one hundred and fifty seventh year) and this leads to the founding of the *Vihara* at the beginning of the 8th century of the Christian era.

In another inscription from Kinalur, near Balusseri published as no. 14 of 1901 the name of a Chera king hitherto unknown to the Kerala historians by name Vijayaraja occurs who is shown as a patron of Jainism and devotee of Tirukkunavay[65]. It is also pertinent to note that in the excavations conducted in 1970 by the Archaeological survey of India in the region, portions of a medieval citadel wall and the foundations of an early medieval temple of peculiar shape of about the 8th or 9th century are found and in the light of the Putadi—Talakkavu inscriptions, these remnants may be identified as belonging to the old Tirukkunavay shrine. Kalpetta has a Jain population of 2,000. They are said to be migrants from Mysore during the incursions of Tippu Sultan. In Varatur near Panmana, Vennayottu, Palakkunnu, there are extant remains of Jain influence. In Puttananati two temples are still under the management of Jains, where icons of both Jain and Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped.

Tiruchchanattumalai near Chitaral in the erstwhile Vilavangode taluk of Travancore is a hill studded with Jain monuments. The icons found in the Cavern temple of Bhagavathi have been identified with that of Ambika Yakshi, Parsvanatha, Mahavira and other Tirthankaras. The Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna though a Hindu had endowed this temple in 925 A.D[66] The place seems to have been sufficiently famous in earlier times so as to attract Jains from such distant places as Tirunanrungondai in Tirukkoyilur taluk of the South Arcot district, Kudavasal in the Tanjore district etc.[67] The votive figures have all engraved below their seats inscriptions in archaic *Vattezhuthu* script, mentioning the names etc., of the persons who carved them. The

65. Ibid., p. 73-73.
66. T. A. S. Vol. I, pp. 193-4.
67. Ibid., Vol. II, Part II, p. 125.

features of the images bear striking resemblance with the descriptions given in *Manasara* and *Brihat Samhita*. The figure of Padmavatidevi bears close resemblance to the Hindu *sakthi*, Durga as depicted in the Ellora cave temples[68]. There are Jain images of Padmavati, Parsavantha and Mahavir in the temple of Nagaraja in the town of Nagercoil. T. A. Gopinatha Rao is of the view that the temple continued to be a Jain temple till the beginning of the 16th century[69] as seen from the inscription regarding the endowment of the Travancore king Bhutalavira Udayamarthandavarman. The lands granted by Udayamarthanda Varma are all uniformly said to be *Pallichchandams* - a term applied only to lands belonging to the Jaina and Buddhist temples. The performing priests bore the charcteristic Jaina names of *Kamalavahana Pandita* and *Gunavira Pandita*.[70] The Sthaniship of this and the Bhagavathy temple at Tiruchchanattumalai was held "by a set of Brahmana who might eat in the houses of other Brahmanas, but the other Brahmanas should not eat in his[71]". It is believed that there was a large colony of Jains at Nagercoil.

Dr. Burnel considers the Tamil-Malayalam character of the Jewish and Syrian inscriptions the origin of the character used in the Asoka's edicts. Robert Caldwell's observation on this is "that the character of the Asokan inscriptions (in the third century B.C.) was gradually modified into the Tamil-Malayalam character (the earliest dated specimen of which belongs to copper *Sasanas* dated A D 774) in the lapse of centuries and in the progress of literature from the original seats of the

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68. In Indian art collections, it is difficult to determine whether a Devi figure belongs to the Hindu, the Jaina or the Buddhist religion since all devis are sculptured exactly in the same manner

69. T. A. S, Vol. II, Part II, p. 697.

70. The relevant portion of the inscription reads. Hail! prosperity! This is a royal command. For the performance of the mid-day service named the Viramartandan—Sanchi to the (God) Nagar at Kottaru who is receiving the great *pujas* and is pleased to be seated in the temple (the king Bhutalavira Udayamarthandavarman gave) in the hands of Guruvira Pandita and Kamalavahana Pandita the managers of the temple certain pieces of land . ..

71. Ibid., p.128.

Ayvans to the extreme south, surely be regarded as more probable in itself than that the Asoka character was nothing more than an adoption or imitation of the Tamil-Malayalam character, even though we should grant that the latter may originally have presented some difference of form-of which, however, there is now no proof"[72]. The alphabets of Telugu, Malayalam, Tamil, Singhalese and Burmese have been borrowed from Sanskrit. The three Dravidian alphabets viz., the Tamil, the Malayalam and the Telugu—Canarese together with their older but now obsolete shapes and the *Grantha* have all been derived from the early Deva-nagari or rather from the still earlier characters contained in Asoka's inscriptions. It is true that the characters have been modified by natural and local influences and especially by custom.

Another confirmation of Jain influence in Kerala could be seen in the induction of Jain terminology in Malayalam. The earliest votaries of Dravidian literaure appear to have been Jains. Robert Caldwell most pertinently remarks "Doubtless the Jainas themselves used Sanskrit in southern as in northern India at the commencement of their work as teachers (probably for a century or two) before they set themselves to the task of developing amongst each of the Dravidian races a popular literature independent of their rivals the Brahmans[73]. The most ancient and esteemed grammar of the Kannada literature *Sabdamanidarpanam* (Jewel Mirror of Words) was written by Kesava or Kesiraja, a Jaina and this work is even now the sole genuine yardstick for all the niceties of Kannada of the present day. The Jains of the old Pandya country aroused by an anti Brahmanical feeling took an antagonistic stand against the spread of Sanskrit and it is said that they undertook the writing of grammatical and rhetorical works.

Some of the oldest Tamil works extant were written or claimed to have been written by the Jains. The *Naladiyar* and the *Kural* are said to belong to the Jaina cycle in the history of

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72. Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages op. cit. p. 9.

73. A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages Introduction op. cit. p. 122.

Tamil literature. Some scholars arrived at this conclusion from the internal evidence of the works themselves. Caldwell is of the view that "Tamil is indebted for its high culture and its comparative independence of Sanskrit" chiefly to the Jains. In the ethical apophthegms Sanskrit has been out done by Tamil because of the Jain influence. The *Chinthamani*, the *Divakaram*, the *Pinkala* and the *Choodamani Nighantu* are all said to be the compositions of the Jains. The impact of the Jain terminology on Malayalam is detected by the presence of loan words from Jain Prakrits of Ardhamagadhi, Jain Maharastri and Jain Sauraseni *Achuthan (Accuda)—Astamayam (Atthamaya), Ambujam (ambuya), Ayan (Aya), Jagam (Jaga), Yogi (Jogi), Narayam (Naraya), Nivati (Nitva), Pankajam (Pamkaya), Makaviram (Magasira, Vairam (Vayara)*, Vivegikku *(Vivega)*, Vedivan *(Vediava)* are some such words.

Impact of Buddhism and Jainism

With the ascendancy of the Brahamanism, by the 12th century A. D. Buddhism was completely wiped out of Kerala, yet it has left its permanent and lasting vestiges on the life and habits of the people of Kerala. Scholars agree that Hindu religion, philosophy, literature, art, architecture and customs had been enriched by the Buddhist movement. It is believed that the great Sankaracharya was by birth a *Sakta* and that his early Vedic schooling was under Govinda, the student of Gaudapada who was a Buddhist according to some scholars. Some tradition describes Sankara as a *Prachanna Buddha* (a Buddhist in disguise) and his *Maya* ·la as crypto-Buddhism. Many hold that Sankara's doctrines of Maya and Moksha are Buddhistic in character. Dr. Radhakrishnan has the following pertinent observation in this regard: "Sankara's conception of 'Moksha' (freedom) is not much different from the Buddhist view of 'Nirvana'. If we introduce the reality of an absolute 'brahman' into early Buddhism we find the Advaita Vedanta again[74]. Sankara's monastic order of dedicated workers bears close resemblance to the Sanghas of Buddhism. 'He learnt from the Buddhist church that discipline, freedom from superstition and ecclesiastical organisation help to

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74. Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p. 473.

preserve the faith clean and strong....Buddhism created in the region of thought a certain atmosphere from which no mind could escape and it undoubtedly exercised a far reaching influence on Sankara's mind"[74]. *But there is a school of thought which strongly adheres to the view that Sankara developed the whole system of Advaitha from Upanishads only. However it is reasonable to presume that the prevailing influence of Buddhism in Kerala where Sankara was born might have exerted a potent influence on his mind in evolving his philosophy and reshaping the practices of Hinduism.*

There are many instances of Hindu forms and methods of worship in Kerala which show specific and distinct influence of Buddhism.[75] Among the *Utsavas* or festivals which still retains Buddhist features is the one known as *Kettukazhcha* known for its splendour and paraphernalia in central Travancore. This festival is observed in all pomp and splendour in the temples at Chettikulangara, Mavelikkara, Bharanikkavu, Chirakkara, Uzhayakkode, Oachira, Chathannoor, Thattayil, Pannivizha, Aikad, Ezhamkulam etc., in Alleppey, Quilon and Pathanamthitta districts. The festival is celebrated either in the month of *Kumbham* (February—March) or in the month of *Meenam* (March—April) on *Bharani* asterism and known as *Kumbha—Bharani* and *Meena Bharani*. A characteristic feature of this festival of great rejoicing is that people of the different *Karas* (sub-division of the villages) bring to the central shrine huge *Rathams* or Cars varying from 25 feet to 150 feet in height, smaller ones are called *Theru* and the bigger ones *Kuthira*.

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74. Ibid., p.464.
75. Abbe Dubois, the eighteenth century Christian Missionary who spent thirty-one years in South India writes thus: "Buddhists,Brahmins and Jains believe in the fundamental doctrine of metempsychosis. The images they worship bear a great likeness to one another and most of them seem to be merely allegorical emblems invented to help them to remember their original divinities. All their religious establishments are alike composed of priests, monks and hermits. All their sacrifices and ceremonies which accompany them are identical. And, lastly, there is resemblance of the languages used by the priests in their religious services......All these help to prove incontestably the affinity existing between the three religions. (Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, Oxford, 1906, pp.107—8).

They are made of bamboo or coconut tree and will be caparisoned with white cloth and coloured silk. The Theru and *Kuthira* have several layers or floors and present the appearance of huge pagodas. Besides the members of each Kara bear huge decorated effigies, the more important ones are Siva's vehicle (the Bull), Bheema, Panchali, Hanuman etc., which are placed on elevated wheeled platforms. After concluding the *Darshan* the members of the various Karas take up their respective positions in the paddy fields lying either in the east or west of the temple. The effigies will then be taken round the temple for *Pradakshina*. This impressive performance is supposed to be a remnant of the Buddhist ritualistic performance, and bears close likeness to Fa-Hien's description of the Buddhistic festival which he saw in the city of Pataliputra. To quote him "Regularly every year on the eighth day of the second moon they have a procession of images. They make a four-wheeled car of five stories by lashing together bamboos, and these stories are supported by posts in the form of crescent-claded habberds. The car is over twenty feet in height and in form like a pagoda and it is draped with a kind of white Cashmere, which is painted in various colours. They make images of Devas ornamented with gold, silver and strass, and with silk banners and canopies overhead. At four sides they make niches each with a Buddha sitting inside and a Bodhisatva in attendance...... On the above mentioned day all the ecclesiastics and laymen in the district assemble;they have singing and high class music and make offerings of flowers and incense".[76] The *Rathotsava* or car festivals are celebrated in many other temples of Kerala. It is contended by some writers that the temple processions in Kerala owe much of their features to Buddhistic ritualistic performances. The elephant procession *(Anai Ezhunnallippu)* with its accompaniments of *Muthukuda*, *Alavattam*, *Venchamaram* etc., has marked similarity to the processions of the Buddhists.

There is a strong view that the cult of snake worship (Naga *worship)* originated from the spread of Buddhism in Kerala. For ages, snake worship was a common form of animistic worship followed by the Buddhists in many places of the world. The

76. The Travels of Fa. Hsien, Translated by H. A. Giles, p-47.

Mahavamsa says that *naga* worship was widespread in the kingdom of Majorica on the banks of river Krishna ruled by a Buddhist king. In countries like Burma and Malaya where Buddhism is even now an important religion, snake worship is practised. The Jain temple at Mount Abu shelters magnificent images of snakes side by side with those of the Thirthamkaras. It is a common feature of Buddhist and Jain temples that the images are carved beneath a hooded cobra. The sculptures of Amaravathi Stupa give prominence to Cobra. The Buddhist Licchavis were renowned snake worshippers. This view does not find favour with many scholars on the origin of snake worship in Kerala which they attribute to the early Sangam age and that it made its appearance in the Neolithic epoch. The snake cult seems to have been probably originated among the pastoral folk who dreaded venomous reptiles both for themselves and for their cattle. *Nattinai* refers to snake pits in and around trees which were places of worship. Snake worship prevailed in early Persepolis. The Crocodile was worshipped in one part of Egypt while the Ichneumon, the mortal enemy of its young ones was worshipped in another. The serpent cult may be traced among the ancient Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Hebrews, Persians and even among Christains of Syria and other parts of Western Asia. Major Oldham thinks that the legend of St. George and the Dragon was probably founded upon serpent cult. The Hindus worshipped Garuda, the mortal enemy of the snakes. In Kerala, we find snake shrines in households of the affluent Namboothiris and Nayars while the practice is not prevalent among the Ezhavas who according to some historians are regarded as converts from Buddhism.

Even though the correlation of naga worship with Buddhism cannot be affirmed convincingly it is pertinent to note that the two outstanding centres of snake worship Mannarasala and Vettikode are situated in the immediate vicinity of the Sreemoolavasam of hoary past. Innumerable devotees flock to these sacred spots from all parts of Kerala to worship and offer sacrifices to the snakes.

The practice of domiciliary treatment of the mentally deranged in Tiruvizha and Chottanikkara temples, leprosy afflicted in

Takazhi and Kanjirakode temples, rheumatic ailments in Guruvayur temple,[77] spider sting in Kodumon Palliyara Bhagavathi temple etc., are considered to be reminiscent of Buddhistic influence. During the heydays of Buddhist *Viharas* as centres of public life, it had been the practice to prepare oils and medicines and treat the sick devotees. It is well known that in ancient India, the most skilful physicians were Buddhists. In the learned introduction to *Rasa Vaiseshika Sutra*,[78] K. Sankara Menon observes "under the care and tutelage of the Buddhist sanyasins, the Nayars attained a marvellous degree of scholarship and acuteness in all branches of Indian Sciences". According to him Bhadanta Nagarjuna, the author of *Rasa Vaiseshika* must have been a Buddhistic *Sanyasin* of Kerala educated and trained by Buddhists. "The word *Bhadanta* occurs in *Varaha Mihira's Brahat Jataka*. This appellation *Bhadanta* is perhaps added to the name Nagarjuna to distinguish him from others who bore a similar or same name. Naga is a common name assumed by Nayars of Kerala"[79] The Buddha Sanyasins in the Viharas spent a good portion of their time in curing diseases. *Aryamanju-srimulakalpa* deals with Buddhistic lore in regard to health, wealth, necromancy, astrology etc. This rare book was translated into Chinese language. The Ayurveda Grantha, the *Asthanga Hridaya* whose author Vagbhata is believed to be a Buddhist, has gained considerable acceptance in Kerala also reveals the close contact of Buddhism with Kerala.

The contribution of Buddhism to learning and literacy was considerable. The Buddhist monks in the *Viharas* appear to have been the pioneers in the field of education. It is observed. "It was the monastery that imparted education both to the members of the order and the lay followers: it was the monastery that arranged for public sermons for the enlighenment of the

77. It is said that Melpathoor Narayana Bhattathiri, the renowned author of *Narayaneeyam* got rid of his rheumatism by the treatment at Guruvayoor. The devotional epic was composed in one hundred days during the period of his treatment.

78. Sree Vanchi Sethu Lakshmi Series of Travancore No. 8, introduction.

79. Ibid. Nagarjuna was the celebrated Buddhist chemist and redactor of *Susruta Samhita*.

general population; it was the monastery that possessed the biggest library and helped the cause of multiplication of books by getting them copied".[80] The term *Ezhuthupalli* meaning elementary school found its place in the Malayalam language from the Buddhist practice of imparting and disseminating education by the Buddhists from their *Viharas*. It was the practice temple schools can be traced to Buddists. It was the practice in Kerala to initiate first lessons in reading and writing with the ceremonial invocation of *Jina*[81] or Buddha. *Namosthu Jina* was later on replaced by the Brahmin *gurus* as *Hari Sri Ganapathaye Nama*. The *Viharas* or *chaityas* or *Pallis* were the earliest institutions of learning and they provided ample scope for widening the dimensions of free thought and liberal adjustment with other religions.

There is a popular tradition that the Ezhavas *(Ilavas)* were Buddhist immigrants into Kerala from Ceylon. The name Ezhava is derived from *Ilam*, the Tamil name for Ceylon. *Simhala* was the ancient name for Ceylon and the caste name of the Ezhavas must have passed through *Simhalan* to *Sihalan* and *Ihalan* and finally to *Ilavan*[82]. The Ezhavas are also known as *Tiyans* and *Tiyan* considered to be a corruption of the Sanskrit *Dvipan* passing through *Tivan*. *Dvipam* in Sanskrit means island and *Tiyan* which is corruption of *Dvipan* means 'islander'. Another argument relating to their island origin is evidenced by the Tarisappalli Copper Plates of Sthanu Ravi (849 A. D.) referring to the leader of the *Ilavas* as the 'Island ruler'. The *Vadakkan Pattukal* or the Northern Ballads describe the *Valia Aromar Chevakar* as the descendant of the *Ilavas* who came from *Iluvathunad* (Ceylon). It is said that the king of Ceylon sent *Ilavas* to Kerala at the request of king Cheraman Perumal. Dr. Caldwell says 'It is undeniable that immigrations from Ceylon to the southern districts of India have occasionally taken place. The Tiyars (properly *Tivars*, islanders) and the Iravars, Singhalese

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80. The Mahabodhi, Vol. V, pp.132.

81. In Manimekhala, Aravana Adigal begins his exposition of Buddhism to the heroine he says 'the first teacher is Jinendra'.

82. Malabar, Logan, p. 145

(from Iram, Ceylon, a word which apears to have been corrupted from the Sanskrit *Simhalam* or rather from the Pali *Sihalam*, by the omission of the initial S) both of the Travancore castes, are certainly immigrants from Ceylon...."[83]. Logan is of the view that Ezhava immigration took place sometime after the first century A. D. It is probable that Ezhava immigration must have taken place when Buddhism was highly popular in Kerala. But it cannot be argued that the Ezhavas came from Ceylon and that they do not form the original Dravidian stock of South India. Caldwell remarks "Dr. Gundert informs me, in the early Portuguese books of voyages, representing the *Tivar* and other Malayalam castes, in which they invariably appear with long hair. The wearing of the hair long appears to have been regarded by the early Dravidian as a distinctive sign of national independence, while the shaving of the hair of the head, with the exception of *Sikha* or *kudumi*, the lock at the back of the head, corresponding to the tail of the Chinese, seems to have been considered as a sign of Aryanisation or submission to Aryan custom and admission within the pale of Aryan protection"[84] The immigrants from Ceylon are not to be considered as Singhalese in the proper sense of the term but as offshoots from the Tamilian population of the northern part of the island. They were the partial reflux of the tide which settled the northern and western parts of Ceylon with Tamilians. We find from historical accounts like *Mahavamsa* that bands of marauding Tamilians (*Solis*, *Pandis* and other *Damiles* viz., Cholas, Pandyas and other Tamilians) frequently invaded Ceylon both before and after the Christian era. On many occasions they acquired supreme power in the northern provinces of the island. There are no records to show that Ezhavas came to settle down during the Chera period. Further there are

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83. A comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages, op. cit. p. 110.

84. Probably it was from the Dravidian settlers in Ceylon that the Singhalese adopted the same usage; for as early as the third century A. D., Agathemerus, a Greek geographer, describing Ceylon, says, "The native cherish their hair as women among us, and twist it round their heads. "There are pictures, Dr. Gundert informs me, in the early Portuguese books of voyages, representing the Tivar and other Malayalam castes, in which they invariably appear with long hair.

references in the folk literature of Ceylon throwing light on the migration of people from Malabar to Ceylon. Among the folk literature, there is the *Malala kathava* which contains the story of seven Malabar Princes "lodging in the premises of the Vihara'.[85]

That warriors from Malabar embarked on military adventure to Ceylon is testified by many references in Ceylonese history. The passage occurring in the Tarisappalli Copper Plates of Sthanu Ravi that "the four Ilava families in which there are eight toddy tappers" were transferred as slaves to the Tarisa Church is to be interpreted on the background of the sophisticated social set up of the 9th century when Aryanisation degraded the Ezhavas who were ardent followers of Buddhism and Jainism to an unprivileged caste. It cannot be contended that the Ezhavas constituted solely by the descendants of the Ceylon immigrants.[86] Of late epigraphical evidence pointing to certain cultural phenomena of the period have come to light. On the basis of the some Tamil Brahmi inscriptions discovered in the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli etc.,[87] (over which the Cheras king held sway in the early centuries of the

85. This narrative.....gives us a glimpse of the character of the early migrations from Malabar. The incident of the seven 'Malala lodging in the premises of the Vihara' seems to show that they were recent arrivals probably Buddhist pilgrims. That they were devoted to arms is also clear from many allusions e.g., they decided to go to Simhala as "It was impossible to indulge in the art of war without paying tribute.... That on landing in Simhala each of them had a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left leaves us in no doubt of their soldierly profession." M. D., Raghavan. Indian in Ceylon History, pp. 175–81.

86. Equally unhistorical is the theory that Ezhavas are immigrants from Ceylon. For, it is most improbable that a section of the people constituting nearly 25 per cent of the Malayalee Hindu population today should have come from outside during the last 2,000 years without leaving behind them any trace of their having come and settled here. It need not be disputed that some people came from Ceylon and they had very much to do with the propagation of Buddhism. What is disputed and should be disputed, is that all or even the majority of the Ezhavas are the descendents of Buddhist immigrants from Ceylon. The manner in which the Ezhavas of today evolved themselves is probably that, as Brahminism brought from the North by small groups was influencing certain sections of the people of Kerala, Buddhism brought from Ceylon by some other small groups was doing the same thing in the case of other sections; and that, while the sections influenced by Brahminism became Namboodiris, *antharala jatis* and Nairs; the sect influenced by Buddhism became Ezhavas Kerala Society & Politics, E.M.S. Namboothiripad, pp 38–39

Christian era) belonging to the period from 3rd century B.C. to 3rd-4th century A.D. we find reference to *Ilavas* as a prosperous community. They appear in these records as adherents of both Buddhism and Jainism—chiefly as donors of cave shelters and beds to Jaina ascetics. These epigraphs reveal that there was great concentration of Jaina ascetics in and around Madurai in the early centuries of the Christian era and earlier, and that the liberality of Chera kings, local chieftains and trading community of Tamizhakam made Jainism one of the favoured faiths of the land.

The word *Ilan* occuring in the passage *Ilan Catikan tana taiya* (the gift made by Ilan Catikan) in the Arittapatti (Mangulam) inscription in the Madurai District,[88] palaeographically assignable to the third century B. C. may be taken to denote a community of Tamizhakom and not the people of Ceylon.[89] The word *Ilam* as applicable to Ceylon is found only in the inscriptions of the 10th century and afterwards and hence the reference in this and similar inscriptions to *Ilan* be taken as referring to a people of the Tamil country and this is all the more strengthened by the Kilavalan inscription of the 3rd to 2nd century B. C. speaking of an *Ilavan*, a lay devotee of Tondi who gave a *palli*.[90] The *Ilava* from Tondi coming to Kilavalan to make a gift of a monastery in the south is particularly significant since Tondi [91] was a port town north of Cranganore. The reference in the Alagarmalai

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87. Early South Indian Palaeography, T. V. Mahalingam, pp 200- 298, University of Madras, 1974. The Pugalur inscription about which reference has already been made reads That is the cave of Cenkayapan, a Jaina monk of Yarrur which was cut or caused to be cut his Ilam Katungo, son of Perunkatunkon son of Cellirumporai"

88. Ibid., pp. 201—211

89. T. V. Mahalingam gives the meaning *Junior* to *Ilan* in this inscription. According to Narayana Rao Ilan means chiefs of wandering traders of Ceylon

90. Ibid., pp 201—211

91. Tondi is identified with the Tyndis of Periplus. It lays down that this place was a centre of trade and lay 500 stadia (nearly 57 miles) to the north of Muzaris. The place has been identified by historians alternatively with Kadalundi, Ponnani and Pantalayini Kollam

inscription (2nd century B. C.) to *Ela(v)a* Atan, a cloth merchant of Venpal, in the Sittannavasal inscription (2nd century B. C.) to Circupocil *Ilavar* who gave an *adhistanam* for Kavuti *Iten* who was born at Kumuthur in the Eominadu[92], the *Ila Kudumpikan* (meaning the Ila husbandman)[93], the *tita Ila a tana* or as Dr. Ravindran puts it '*tana (dana)* made by Antai Ilavan'.[94] The word Tiya[95] is a geographical variant of *Ilava*. The term *Tiyan* Candan occurring in Alagarmalai epigraph No. 15 is used as a class of *Ilan Polalaiyan*. All these epigraphical evidence go to establish that the *Ilavas* and *Tiyar* were a prosperous community even at the time when Asoka was popularising Buddhism and when Jainism was gaining ascendancy in the South.

Aryanisation

We have already alluded to the process of Aryanisation that had its first innings during the post-Dravidian epoch. The aryanisation formed part of a long chain of migration of Aryans moving southward from Gujarat down to Kanyakumari with Parasurama tradition. The earliest of Aryan Brahmin settlement was the one at Cellur which was firmly established even during the Sangam period with a sacrificial tradition and which prepared the way for the diffusion of Aryan culture in Kerala. The process of Aryan (Brahmin) colonisation along the

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92. Eominadu has been identified with the territory round about the modern Tindivanam in the South Arcot District in ancient times as Oymanadu. It has also been suggested that the area bore another name i.e., Erumanadu. But there is no evidence to connect Erumanadu with the Tindivanam area. Further the region does not appear to have had much connection with the Sittannavasal area. In the Ernad Taluk of the Kozhikode district there was a division called Omayanadu in which there was a village by name Umallur. It is possible that Kumattur mentioned in the inscription was the same as Umallur. If that be so, then it may be taken that the place was in the present Kerala State (Mahalingam op.cit. p. 248)

93. This may be compared with the *Ila Kudi* and Ilavakkayar of Tarisappalli Copper Plates.

94. New Light on Ilavas of Pre-Christian Era. Journal of Kerala Studies. Vo. I. S.No. 2 & 3. p. 367

95. Mahadevan takes the word as a mere male personal name. Earlier scholars opine that Tiya is derived from the Sanskrit word dvipa or island, thereby meaning that they had their origin in Ceylon.

West Coast began as early as the Sangam age. The presence of Brahmins in the courts of chieftains and their influence are amply borne out from the references in the Sangam literature. Many of the poets who composed panegyrics on the chieftains were either Brahmins or natives with Aryan Brahmin names. The Sangam society of Tamilakom was not a perfect example of a casteless Dravidian society. It was at best a semi-tribal society. Its chieftains guided the community life under the advice of Aryan priests. Sangam clasics are replete with references to *Andanar* or *Marayo r* like *Parppar*, *Arasar* (king or Kshatriyas) *Vanikar* (Merchants or Vaisya) and *Vellalar* (cultivators). Even though we cannot definitely delineate the existence of the four-fold caste system as it existed in *Aryavartha* or referred to in North Indian scriptures, the notions of caste system were not altogether unknown during the Sangam epoch. The well known Sangam commentator Nachinarkkiniyar does not agree with the view that notions of the Aryan concept of caste was present in the Sangam society. But according to some new scholars the presence of Sanskrit words in Sangam literature,[96] reference to Yajna and references to Aryan deities confirm that the Sangam society contained notions of the caste system also. It is in *Kalithokai* (verse 29) that we first come across reference to the Aryan God of Love *kannan* (krishna). But *Kalithokai* is supposed to be a very late work of the Third Sangam or even perhaps a post-Sangam work. It is contended by scholars that it was composed early in the 4th century A. D. or even during the Kalabhra interregnum.[97] Basing on *Tolkappium*. It cannot be asserted as has been done that in the Sangam society there was clear delineation of upper castes and lower castes in the population. In the Sangam works we find references to occupation oriented divisions such as Idaiyar, Iiyavar, Kadambar, Alavar, Pulaiyar, Panar, Vadugar etc.

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96. Re-interpretations in South Indian History, opp.cit. p. 15. The proportion of Sanskrit words does not depend only on the percentage of Brahmins in Tamizhakom but also on the nature of the subject matter dealt with by the scholars. K.K. Pillai, A Social History of Tamils, opp.cit. p. 132.

97. K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, The Chronology of the Early Tamils, pp. 35 ff and M. Rajamanikkam Date of Kalittogai (Annals of Oriental Research, University of Madras, Vol. xx, 1965).

The regional divisions based on physiographic features in the early Sangam age in due course resulted in the emergence of new divisions of society. The regional basis as well as the occupational distribution led to the rise of several sub sections. We find in the Sangam works besides tribes and regional groups, purely occupational divisions like the *kamalar*. *Kaikkolar*. *Tunnakkkarar* and others. Even among the old occupations, sub-divisions appeared. The *Vettuvar* were considered as lower section to *Kuravar*. Economically the lower section among the *Kuravars* of the *Kurinchi* came to be depicted as the *Ko diyar* and *Ko dichiyar* while the upper sections continued as *Kuravar* and *Kurattiyar* These subcastes classification should not be misconstrued as the impact of aryanisation and the institution of four-caste formula in its traditional sense. It is true that even though there were Aryans, all the Brahmins were not Aryans as in the case of Nampoothiris who were autochthons of Kerala like the Nayars and Ezhavas. It was a gradual assimilation of certain societal groups that culminated in the formation of the group. Some authors have erroneously classified the *Vellar* with the *Sudras* of the Aryan pattern. It may be true to surmise that the Dravidian pattern based essentially on occupations, in due course led to the emergence of numberless sub-castes. With the larger influx of Aryans from the North, the Nampoothiris came to be fused into a unified whole with the admixture of the aryan system based on *Varna*. As P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar observes 'the Brahmins did not succeed in arranging the people of South India as members of the four Varnas as they did in North India. It only led to the confusion of caste and the prevalence of social jealousies that have characterised the life of South India for a thousand five hundred years'.[98] T. K. Velu Pillai in the Travancore State Manual states that 'the notion of migration of peoples has gained such great currency among ethnologists and historians that in writing the history of a country they proceed from a fundamental assumption that the earliest people inhabiting any part of the civilized world must have come from some other part.'[99] E. M. S. Nampoothiripad questions the assumptions of

98. Pre-Aryan Tamil Culture, p. 20.
99. The Travancore State Manual, Vol. II, p.11.

historians as 'fantastic' and states[100] "For, the organization of family life and property relations of the Namboodiri in Kerala is so similar to that of the Nair, and so different from that of the North Indian Brahmin that it is difficult to accept the theory that the Namboodiris are Brahmin immigrants from the North. As a matter of fact, if one were to examine the problem from the point of view of the organization of social life one would be forced to come to the conclusion that the Nair and the Namboodiri belong to the same racial stock, evolved the same form of social and family organisation, the only difference being that the Namboodiri adopted the social and cultural make-up of the North Indian Brahmin to a slightly greater degree than the Nair".

In the pre-Sangam and Sangam periods, there were only clans and the division of the people should not be misconstrued as castes. There were several classes of people engaged in a multitude of vocations. Even though the presence of Brahmins has been acknowledged, it cannot be contended that there was the systematic gradation of society based on the Aryan pattern. Regarding the professions adopted by society centred civilisation of ancients it was the "mental propensity of heredity" of the individual that was the criterion.[101] On this basis even the four-tier division was not on 'activity' or 'Wordly profession' but on psychological propensity'. It is pertinent also to note that the four-tier society of the Aryans was the creation of Manu, a Kshatriya and not a Brahmin. It is true that the interaction of Dravidian and Aryan religious practices had begun by the Sangam Age It may be recalled that some primitive beliefs and rites of the pre-Dravidian inhabitants of South India had been absorbed by the Dravidian inhabitants of South India which were subsequently adopted by Aryans also. Hinduism of Kerala as elsewhere in South India was the result of the comingling of the practices in the pre-Dravidian, Dravidian and Aryan epochs. In a sense Hinduism unlike its counterpart in North India was more tolerant and unique in its absorptive capacity.

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100. Kerala Society and Politics, A Historical Survey, New Delhi, 1984, pp.34-36.

101. Calton, F-Hereditary Genius, Mac Millan, London, 1969.

According to a well known philologist the Aryans were 'splendid barbarians who stepped into other people's shoes, absorbed their culture, improved upon it their language; their social organisation and their religious notion"[102] and to justify this he advances the theory that '*puja*' was unknown in Aryan literature, the Aryan ritual is '*ho ma*' or '*fire-sacrifice*'. '*Puja*' is borrowed by the Aryans from the Dravidians[103]. The method of offering in a '*homa*' is by uttering *svaha* and *Shadha* and in a *puja* it is by *namah*. The assertion that the performance of *yajna* and its magical powers by the Brahmins was a serious bid to reshape the Dravidian Society according to their choice [104] is hardly convincing.

What happened in the Sangam society was that the original tribal system which was both horizontal and compartmental was greatly influenced by the *varna* system which the Aryans introduced. The very division of the Tamil society into Aryan and Dravidian is unscientific, if it is meant to convey an ethnic distinction. In the strict sense, Dravidian and Aryan did not represent racial groups even though they belonged to different cultures. As we have seen the earliest social elements which represented Negroid and Australoid groups subsequently received the Dravidian stock migrated from the eastern Mediterranean regions. Only after the lapse of a few centuries, the waves of Aryans from North came, thereby adding a new element to the evolution of Tamil society. Further crystallisation occured with the full blossoming of Aryanisation. The three main stratifications were those who followed the Brahminical way of life; the non-Brahminical elements among the Dravidian stock and the Dravidian groups. Among the followers, the Brahminical way of life were the exogenous Brahmins from the North and those from the indigenous stock who adopted the Brahminical way of life. This historical process traces the Brahmin and non-Brahmin division. That there were no Kshatriyas and Sudras of the classical *varna* system in the Sangam society is pertinent to be noted. Among the *Savarnas* the Brahmins alone originally wore

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102. Chatterjee, S.K. - Foundation of Civilization in India, p. 71

103. Ibid., pp. 83-84.

104. Re-interpretations in South Indian History, op.cit., pp. 16-17.

the sacred thread, even though later on as an imitation some others also followed their footsteps. The overall impact of the varna system in the South was the acceptance of the social superiority of the Brahmins as a social group and the organization of professions on a hereditary base.

Indeed the Brahmins formed a segment of the Tamil Society centuries before the Sangam age began. The date of Aryan immigration into Kerala, which formed part of the larger social cultural unit of Tamizhakam is a much debated one. Earlier scholars like Logan preclude the existence of Brahmins in Kerala prior to seventh century A. D. Padmanabha Menon assigns a date for the Brahmin colonisation in Kerala to the years immediately before or and after Christ. Later, Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai suggested that it was only by the end of the tenth century that "the Namboodiris organised themselves in 32 villages in Kerala, exercised the highest political and judicial powers and established a parallel government by virtue of their religious authority."[105] But these assertions cannot be accepted in view of the fact, that wave after wave of the Brahmins, Jains, and Buddhists arrived here during Mauryan period especially during Asoka's reign. This process reached a decisive stage by the time of Katyayana (4th century B.C.) the grammarian who mentions the kingdoms of the South. In the Guptan and Post Guptan periods also this migratory trend continued, despite their numerical inferiority. In the traditional accounts of the early Brahmin settlements embodied in the Keralolpathy, it is related that 36 thousand of them were presented with arms *(Sastrabiksha)* by Parasurama, in order to enable them "to protect and rule Kerala, the 160 Katams of land between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari". The Vadagaon-Madhavapur inscription assigned to the first century B.C. on paleographic grounds speaks of a *Vajapeya Yajna*, performed by a person belonging to the *Kasyapa Gotra*. Scholars infer that the process of migration along the West Coast had reached Mysore State by that time and Callur[106] on the border of the Mysore State formed the first Aryan settlement

105. Studies in Kerala History, op. cit. p. 264.

106. Studies in Kerala History, op.cit. p. 264

in Kerala.[107] Cellur is identified with *Perunncellur* (the Great Cellur) found in the traditional history of Brahmins *(Keralolpathy)* and Cellur occurring in *Akananuru* by Marutan Ilanakanar.[108] *Akananuru* gives the name of one Atan Elini as the Lord of Cellur. Other Sangam works like *Pattupattu* speaks of the Brahmins as erudite scholars in the four Vedas. The Chera ruler, Perumcheral Irumporai showed very keen interest in listening to the expositions of the Vedas by learned Brahmins and in acting according to the injunctions contained in the Vedic texts. The *Kalavu* or Pre-marital life described in the *Kurinchipattu* of *Pattupattu* corresponds according to some scholars to *Gandharva* pattern of marriage which was one of the eight systems of marriage in vogue among Aryans of old. The term *Aiyar* occurring in Sangam works, is identified by some authors with *Aryans*.[109] It is also said that the tying of the *Tali* as an essential part of the wedding rite was a distinctive Tamilian practice and that it was adopted by the Aryans in South India.

In the earliest stratum of Tamil literature we find little traces of the penetration of Aryan ideas in the society. The Tamilian of the period was proud of his gentle and thoughtful descendent delighting in martial exploits and worshipping totemic deities. Undoubtedly it took centuries for a transformation and by the time of the Epics like *Silappadhikaram* and *Manimekhala*, the picture was altering and we perceive deeper penetration of Aryan ideals and standards. As the rigidity of

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107. For details See Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol.II, Part I, Trivandrum. 1975, pp. 11-16.

108. In a love-song Marutanar says: "Like the high and noble sacrificial pillar which the Great one with the Axe who extirpated the Kshatriyas after crushing the murderous elephants, erected at Cellur (a place glorified with the never-extinguishing sacrificial fire), for the purpose of the sacrifice which he accomplished with hard labour". Two inscriptions discovered on the *Adhisthana* (basement) of Thrichambaram Temple record Cellur as one of the prominent Brahmin settlement during the Cheras of Mahodayapuram (M.G.S. Narayanan - Political and Social conditions in Kerala under the Kulasekhara Empire, 1972).

109. According to K.K. Pillai, the usage of the appellation Aiyar to Brahmins appeared later. This term in its original sense meant to denote leaders of the society.

Brahmanic observances grew, groups which refused to accept orthodox custom or steadfastly clung to old rites and observances were branded as *Sudras* by the Brahmins. We find references to the uncompromising attitude taken by many groups not to fall in line with Brahmanical injunctions. The word Sudra is interpreted by some scholars to denote a non-Aryan tribe which became subordinate to the Aryan conquerors and which refused to adhere to customs which have long become abhorrent such as meat eating or the remarriage of the widows or illegitimate concubinage. The religion, philosophy and outlook of life of the numerically small Brahmins appealed to many original inhabitants like the Nampoothiris of Kerala and they chose the Brahmanical way of life volitionally. The rulers of Tamilakam invited the Brahmins and placed them in positions of responsibility such as ministers, *purohits*, ambassadors, astrologers etc. Lands granted to them were exempt from taxation. The influence wielded by the newcomers on the kings and chieftains led to confrontation with the local wise men *(Sidhas* or *Arivar)* who resented the Brahminical assumption of superiority. The Naladiyar, the Kural and other non-Brahmanical compositions are full of references of the kind. In many works the sentiments of anti-Brahmanism are apparent. There were rivalries in the adoption of the Brahmanical way of life between the different groups of Brahmins also. We see in Tamilnad, the Brahmin with faith in temples and idol worship as opposed to the Vedic Brahmin who was a sacrificing priest with no belief in iconic worship. The Nampoothiri Brahmins who served as priests and devotees are a classical example of this type.

At the time when the Ten Idylls *(Pattupattu)* were composed. Aryan influence was jut beginning to be felt. The Brahmins might have come at least about five centuries before the Sangam age began. But the Brahminical way of life in all its rigidity andfaith in *Yajna* might have taken deep roots only by the fourth or fifth century A.D. According to the *Kali Day (Dina)* calculation devoted by the Chronogram '*Yajnasthapanam Surakshya*', relating to the ninety-ninth *Yajna* conducted by the vedic dignitary of the Kerala Brahmans, Mezhathol Agnihotri, it was in 378 A.D. The *kalidinam* relating to the birth of Agnihotri which reads as Purudhisamasraya, was in 343 A.D. Paradoxically

enough this date corresponds with the reign of Mayura Sarman (345—370 A.D) the founder of the Kadamba dynasty who figures in the Talagunda inscription and his son Chandragatan who sent colonies of Brahmins to Kerala and Tuluva countries. According to the inscription Sarman was added as appellation to establish the fiction of brahmanical origin of the Kadambas. Mayura Sarman went to Kaṇchi, the capital of the Pallavas to prosecute his vedic studies[110]. The domination of Kerala by other South Indian powers like the Chalukyas, the Pallavas and the Rashtrakudas in the 6th 7th and 8th centuries accelerated the pace of Aryan immigration. There are, some evidences to show that the Brahmins of Kerala had maintained close links with these powers. References to Kerala or Chera are frequent in the inscriptions of these South Indian dynasties in the period from 2nd century onwards and the country figures among the vaunted conquests of these powers. There was large scale immigration of Aryans towards the South with the Arab invasion of Sind and the destruction of Valabhi. The Chalukyas of Vatapi and the Kadambas of Vanavasi rendered all help to the Aryans to settle down in the South and this led to the emergence of a large number of Brahmin settlements in Kerala and Tulunad by the 8th century. By about the 10th century, the Brahmins established 64 *gramams* in Kerala and Tulunad. It is contended that the Western Chalukyas who were Vaishnavites sent large bands of Brahmin colonists to Kerala, so also the Rashtrakudas who were Saivites. There is a view that the Panniyur and Chovaram factions among the Nampoothiris derived their inspiration from the Vaishnavite Chalukyas and the Saivite Rashtrakutas respectively. Dandi, the famous poet who lived in the Pallava Court at Kanchipuram during the 7th century was all praise for the erudition of two Brahmin scholars of Kerala. The *Mathavilasaprahasana* of Mahendra Varma (585—630 A.D) was one of the favourite themes of the Chakyars of Kerala. The Avantisuntari

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110. It is claimed that Mezhathol Agnihotri was a fellow student of Mayura Sarman (Keralasahityacharithram Vol I, p. 83) The name of Mayuravarma occurs in the Tuu *Gramapaddhati* and some scholars assert that Mayuravarman was a Jaina. But the mention of Mayuravarman as a Brahmin, an eminent twice born of the Kadamba family in the Talagunda lithic record disproves this assertion.

Kathasara of Dandi contains reference to Kerala and its Brahmin scholars. That Chalukyas were zealots of Brahmanical Hinduism is testified by the discovery of an inscription of Kirtivaraman II from Kerala. The Edakkal cave inscription of Vishnuvardhana Kadamba testifies to the assumption—that the Brahmin settlements of Kerala came into existence under the Chalukya-Kadamba influence. The 32 of the 64 villages mentioned in tradition have been identified south of the river Perumpuzha in Kerala. The contemporary literature and inscriptions refer to most of these villages. As many as 23 of these villages survive even to this day. Besides these, *Upagramas* or subsidiary village settlements also existed. The Vazhappally copper plate of Rajasekhara (C-830 A.D) refers to Vazhappally as an *Upagrama* of Tiruvalla.

Even though non-aryan fusion with Aryan practices began at an early period beginning with the Sangam classics, Aryanization reached its zenith in the 8th and 9th centuries. A tradition is there that 6 eminent Brahmin scholars came along with the immigrants, met the Buddhists in argument, completely defeated them and established the supremacy of Hinduism. The *Bhakthi* movement of the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries stimulated the whirl-wind of Aryanization. The greatness of the *Bhakthi* literature which developed in Kerala and Chola and Pandya countries in the period from 7th and 9th centuries was unparalleled in the literary history of any other Indian language. Hinduism attained new vigour by destroying Buddhism and Jainism and by assimilating the tenets of those religions. It has to be noted that the Saivite monks like Appar and Tirujnana Sambandar (7th century) reviled the Buddhists and the Jains. The propagation of the tenets of the Aryan spiritual thought gained a momentum under the leadership of Prabhakara, the great *meemamsa* teacher. The system of philosophy propounded by Prabhakara was called Gurumatha[111]. He had institutionalised the study of the Vedic faith He belonged to the *Kuttulli Illam* in Sukapuram. Kumarilabhatta was another champion in the field of propagation

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111 *Prabhakara's commentaries on Sabarabhashya* named *Brhati* of 12,000 *Slokas* and *Laghavi* of 6,000 form the basis of *Gurumatha*.

of Aryan religious doctrines.[112] Prabhakara's *Gurumatha* is supposed to be an improvement upon Kumarila's commentaries praised by *Salikanatha* and *Ramanuja*. It Was during this epoch that the Yajna oriented Brahmanism metamorphosed into temple based institutionalism. Eventually the transformation became almost final with the whirlwind *Digvijaya* campaign of Sankaracharya, right across the Indian Peninsula. The period that followed was probably the most creative epoch in the history of South India which was marked by the revival of Saivism and Vaishnavism engineered by great exponents like Kulasekhara Alwar, Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Viralminda Nayanar and a host of others. The attitude of Saiva Nayanars and Vaishnava Alwars unlike the early Alwars of the 6th century was one of uncompromising antagonism to Jainism and Buddhism. According to Sundaramoorthy Nayanar, there were 63 saints. Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar were authors of this *Tevaram*, a collection of saivite canonical literature. Among the Vaishnavities, there were twelve Alwars of whom Nammalvar, the author of *Tiruvaymozhi* was one. This Vellala saint's verses are considered on a par with the Vedic hymns. The Saivite faction of the *Bhakthi* movement had as its principal objective the elimination of external heresy and quelling internal religious disorders to redeem the *Saktha* religion (worship of *Sakti)* (female generative energy) which degenerated into obscene orgies. The lead in this direction was given by the Princess Andal and Poet Manikkavachagar by the end of the 9th century. The South Indian *bhakthi* tradition as contradistinct from that of the North attached singular fidelity to Hindu thought from the *Vedas* to *Upanishads* and the Gita. The Saiva, Vaishnava Bhakthi cult of Tamilnad and Kerala owe their origin to early Hindu and Vedic cult. It was Sri Sankara along with Kumarila Bhatta who recreated the ancient *Vedic* Brahmanicial though and preached

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112 Kumarila-bhatta was the first Indian scholar who clearly discerned a difference between Sanskrit and the Dravidian vernaculars, styled the Dravidas and Andhras (The Tamil and Telugu people) *'Mleachahas'* meaning thereby rude, aboriginal, non-Brahmanised tribes (Robert Caldwell, opp.cit. p.576). Kumarila Bhatta used the term *Andhra-Dravida-Bhasha* to denote the Dravidian family of languages. Kumarila established the doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedas and the need of confeerming to their *Vidhis* (injunctions).

a philosophical monism by promulgating the renowned doctrine of Maya or Illusion. However all the three movements—Saiva, Vaishnava and Advaitha—re-established the paramountcy of Veda whether they be *Bhakthi* or *Jana* or *Karma*. The *mattas* established by Shri Sankara helped to keep ablaze the tenets of Hinduism through the Smarta (pertaining to Smritis). The *Smarthaism* tradition of Sankara preferred Sanskrit as the language of the masses for the metaphysical exposition. Vishnu Sarma (later Padmapadacharya) from Alathur, near Trikkantiyur became the first disciple of Sankara and his *Panchapadika* is even now one of the most important of the works known to us[113].

Neither Prabhakara nor Sankara, the apostle of *Advaita* wrought any decisive influence on the masses. Their interpretations of the tenets of Hinduism were in Sanskrit which was beyond the reach of the common folk Hence a conscious effort was made by the leaders of the *Bhakti* movement in South India to give expressions to their experiences in the language of the masses and thus communicate spiritual, mystic and religious experiences. This was deemed all the more necessary in order to bring down the popularity of Jainism and Buddhism. It cannot be denied that even during this formative epoch to revive Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism played no little dominant role in the social history of the people. It was during this period that *Chintamani*, the famous Jaina epic appeared to appeal to the intellectual nourishment of the elite of the day. It must be recalled here that Periapuranam containing the stories of 63 Saiva Saints was written to counter this influence at the instance of Kulottunga Chola II. Besides *Chintamani*, other epics like . *Nilakesi*, *Valaiyapati Kundalakesi*, *Chulamani* etc., by Jain and Buddhist scholars appeared in the meanwhile: Hence conscious effort was put forth by Hindu revivalists like Ramanuja and Madhava to counter the heretical enemies of Hinduism. They made a conscious effort to link the devotional hymns with the Vedic tradition. There soon arose a schism among the Vaishnavas. This culminated in the emergence of the northern Sanskrit tradition with centre at Kanchi known as Vadakalai under Vedantadesika and the Southern Dravida tradition (Tenkalai)

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113. Das Gupta, History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p. 103.

with their religious capital at Srirangam with Pillai Lokacharya in the middle of the thirteenth century. To the latter school belonged Narayana Das of Trivandrum who is highly venerated as a great Vaishnavite teacher as gleaned from the sacred chronicles of the Vaishnavites.[114]. Besides the Saivites and Vaishnavites the occult practices of the *Siddhas* who worshipped one supreme Deity, *Ahamic Siva* and the Aryanized Tamils subscribing to the worship of Siva in preference to the authority of the Vedas also prevailed. In course of time the *Siddhas* compromised with the Aryanized Tamils and this gave rise to what was called *Vaidika Saivam* which effected the fusion of all the Hindus as a whole against their Buddhistic and Jain bretheren.

The role of the Alwars and the Nayanars from Kerala who belonged the Vaishnavite and the Saivite wings of the *Bhakti* movements need be emphasized here. Kulasekhara Alwar, Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Viralminda Nayanar from Kerala were the savants of the *Bhakti* Movement in Tamilakom.

Kulasekhara Alwar[115] reputed in the Vaishnavite literature is believed to be the founder of the Chera of Mahodayapuram. He was the author of the notable devotional poem in Sanskrit

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114. Unfortunately the people of Kerala know very little about this great disciple of Pillai Lokacharya. Narayana Dasa is variously known among Vaishnavites as *Vilam Choiai Pillai* and *Nalanthikal* (having godly virtues) *Narayanar*. He lived with Lokacharya at Srirangam who vouchsafed to him the secrets of the spiritual life and the intricacies of the Holy books. He was the teacher of Sri Sailesa also known as Tiruvaimozhi Pillai who played an undisputed part in shaping Northern Indian Vaishnavism. Narayana Das is referred to in the famous Vaishnava scripture *Yatindra Pravana Prabhavam*. Narayana Dasa who belonged to Aranmur, a suburb of Trivandrum has written *Saptha Kathai*, which contains the essence of Guru-Lokacharya's treatise. He was an outcaste by birth. According to the Vaishnava tradition, this teacher of teachers finally became one with God in the inner sanctuary (sanctum sanctorum) of the Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple at Trivandrum. 'Nalanthikal Naranadasar' occuring in Kannada inscription of the Hoysala king Ramanatha refers to Narayana Dasa.

115. Kulasekhara Alwars' hundred and five songs form part of Tamil Vaishnava canon *Nalayiraprabhandham* under the name *Perumal Tirumozhi*.

Mukundamala besides the 105 tamil verses forming the *Perumal Tirumozhi* in the Tamil canon of Vaishnavas. Mukundamala was inscribed in a mandapa in Pegu in Burma in the 13th Century A. D. This Vaishnava *acharya* and Saint was proficient alike in Sanskrit and Tamil. This great religious mystic, it is said, was born as the incarnation of Vishnu's *Kaustubha*. It is said that he was fascinated towards Vaishnavism by the songs of Sathagopa or Nammalvar[116]. This great warrior king who conquered the Chola and Pandya Kingdoms, at last retired to the forest to live the life of a *Vanaprasta*. Kulasekhara utilized his position to do moral and religious propaganda. The fourth dasakam of his songs in the Perumal *Tirumozhi* in praise of Sri *Tiruvenkita*, the Lord of *Tirupathi* hill. This ardent devotee of Sri Rama praises God Vishnu of Chidambaram (Tillai Nagar) Tiruchitrakutam in his 10th *Desakam*. There is a legend that the intense religious fervour of the king incited his ministers who wanted to get rid of his Vaishnavite devotees. They removed a costly jewel from the image of his tutelary deity and attributed the theft to these devotees. The pure royal saint pleaded their innocence by offering to put his hands into a pot containing cobras. The cobras refused to harm the noble soul. The ministers realized his sincerity and greatness and thereafter meekly submitted to his direction. The charm of the throne did not weigh with him and he had his son crowned and retired to a life of penance and prayer. He made extensive pilgrimage from Srirangam to Tirupathi until at last he reached Mannarkoil in Tirunelveli District where he entered eternal bliss. The *Mukundamalai* portrays the grief stricken king exhibiting his keen passion for reunion with God Almighty. "Upon my brow I will bear with pride". declares Kulasekhara Alwar in his devotional *Perumal Tirumo zhi*" the mud that stains their (devotees) holy feet". This pious declaration of the royal saint amply justifies how great a religious mystic was he. Well versed in the puranas, the Trayi and other allied literature, this saintly king is compared to Asoka, the Great.

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116. There was a shrine dedicated to Satagopar at Kodungallur as late as A.D. 1400 (Elamkulam-Chila Kerala Charithra Prasnangal, Vol. III, p. 10).

Cheraman Perumal Nayanar[117] identified with Rajasekhara Varman (820—845 A. D.) the second king in the long line of the Cheras of Mahodayapuram was an equally distinguished and renowned teacher and preacher of the Saiva cult. · The story of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar is narrated by Sekkilar in his *Periyapuranam*. He is described to have spent his boyhood at Tiruvanchikulam and became king when his father renounced wordly life. He was a close associate and friend of the great Saivite Saint Sundaramurthi of Tirunavalur who composed the *Saivite* devotional songs known as *Tevaram*—(the seventh *Tirumurai)* along with Appar and Sambandar. In the company of Sundaramurthi he wandered from place to place propagating the Saiva cult. Cheraman Perumal Nayanar was the royal patron of Sundaramurthi and he breathed his last at Mahodayapuram. There is an interesting story how Nayanar on the demise of his companion Sundaramurthi prayed to follow him to *Kailasa*, the abode of Siva and his prayer to join Sundaramurthi was granted and they both proceeded to attain salvation at *Kailasa*; Sundaramurthi on a white elephant and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar on a horse. Sheik Zainuddin refers in his *Tohful-ul-Mujahideen* to this ascent of the Cheraman Perumal Nayanar to heaven with his own mortal body and the festival celebrated in his honour at Kodungallur. It is said that the *Tirukkailaya-nana-Ula*,[118] a schematic poem of ten groups of three stanzas

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117. In Sekkilar's *Cheramannayanapuranam*, the following places in *Paradesa* (outside Kerala) had been visited by Nayanar: Chidambaram, where the Perumal praised the Lord with his son beginning with Ponvannattandadi (53): Tiruvarur where he was received by Sundaramurthi and where he praised the Lord with his song beginning with Tirumammanmkkovai (60): Tirukkizhavelur (84): Tirunagaipattanam or Nagapattanam (84), Tirumaraikkadu or Vedaranyam (85): Tiruvagattiyampalli (88), Tirukkotukkuzhakar (89): Tiruppattur (90): Madura (90): Tiruppuvanam (97), Tiruvappanur (101), Tiruvetakam (101), Tirupparakunram (102): Tirunelveli (107): Rameswaram (109), from where he bowed towards Tirukketiswaram in Ceylon in humble homage: Tiruchuzhi (111): Tirukkanapper (114), Tiruppunavayil (117): Tiruppataleswaram (120): Tirukkantiyur (130), Tiruvayar to reach which the Kaveri, then in floods, provided a way, at the command of Siva, in response to Sundara's supplication, just as the Punjab rivers had done in response to Visvamitra's prayer (Rig Veda) and the Chazhiyar is said to have done for Chelapparambu Namputhiri, and Kongunad (140-143) where Perur is situated (K.V. Krishna Ayyar, History of Kerala, pp. 137-38).

each in a different metre— (an *ahaval* followed by a *venba* and a *Kalatturai)* was written by nayanar at Kailasa after he reached the sacred mountain in the company of Sundaramurthi. The other devotional songs attributed to him are *Tiruvalur-mummanik-Kovai* in the same genure as Tirukkailayanana-ula and *Ponvannattandadi* in a hundred verses. These songs are included in the orthodox Saiva canon and still sung in the Siva temples.

Viralminda Nayanar is included in the galaxy of the sixty three holy Saiva Saints. The *Periyapuranam* informs that he have a Vellala born at Kodimatha in Chenganur in Pathanamthitta District. This ardent devotee of Siva called himself *Sivanadiyar* literally meant slave of Siva. The tradition ascribed to him records that he used to worship first and foremost the devotees of Siva considering them as even more worthy of his regard than God himself. He spent all his time in the Chenganur Siva temple serving the pilgrims. Towards the end of his life, he went on a pilgrimage to Tiruvalur where he came into contact with Sundaramurthi Nayanar. There is an anecdote relating to his visit to Tiruvalur. He saw the great Saivite Saint Sundaramurthi going into the inner sanctum of the temple completely unaware of the large assemblage of devotees in the mantapa in front of the temple. On seeing this the righteous indignation of Viralminda Nayanar was aroused and he cried out that the guilty person was a *bhrashta* or an outcaste and that even the God who showered his blessings on such a sinner was an outcaste. Sundaramurthi was throughly flabbergasted and stunned at this outburst. The great devotee *(Vantandar)* Sundaramurthi then began singing *Thiruttondattokai* in praise of *Sivanadiyar* and won the acclamation of Viralminda. The literary connotation of the word *Viral-mindar* is, one whose words carried victorious force and strength.[119] No doubt this

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118. This song is held to be the first of a new style in religious as well as secular literature.

119. Thevaram-Swaminatha Pandikar's edition of Ciralmindanayanar Puram, p. 1057. It is worthy of notice, that 'mindu' in Malayalam means 'to speak' and the very name of the saint bears the flavour of the language of the country to which he belonged. (See Some Aspects of Kerala and Tamil Literature, Part. I. opp.cit. pp. 31—32).

well known Saivite Saint occupies a pre-eminent position of high esteem among the Hindu revivalists of the ninth century in South India.

Rise of temples

The earliest temples so far discovered in Kerala date from the eighth century A.D. It is true that temples were there before this period. But they might have submerged in the horizon of time as most of them were built with perishable materials like wood. In *Pattupattu* there are references to painting and architecture. The people of the *Sangam* age made images but they do not seem to have been in any enduring materials as no statues are now found in Kerala or Tamilnad. The worship prevalent was *linga*. There was no idol worship. There was only *Kandu* or pillar placed for common worship in public halls. Of course the idea of a universal God was there as may be inferred from a reference in *Pattinapalai* to a flag "to the spotless, glorious God adored by all". From *Perumpanattupadai* we learn that there was a Brahmin village where Brahmins recited Vedic texts and taught even parrots their verses and performed priestly rites, erecting the Yupa post. In *Nedunalvadai*, the reference to 'those versed in architecture' is probably to *Silpasastra* introduced by the Aryans and 'room named after the womb' is possibly to *Garbhagraha* which literally means womb-like abode and is usually applied to the innermost part of a temple. The Brahmin monks are described in *Maduraikanchi* as living in caves. The *Malaipadukadam* clearly states that Gods resided in pillars *(Kandus)* dedicated for the purpose. The God symbolised by pillars of wood or stone stood under some spreading tree where the worshippers assembled. When Aryanisation gained ascendancy, temples on a uniform model sprang up by the side of umbrageous trees where contiguous shade has served as the home of God. The banyan and other trees seen near the temples even now point to this period of transformation. The Kings guided by their Brahmin priests raised monuments of architecture for divine worship and service and richly endowed them with properties for their proper and efficient management and upkeep.

The reason for the rise of temples of stone was the prevalence and subsequent decline of Jainism and Buddhism. Saivism was the old pre-historic religion of South India existing from Pre-Aryan times and held sway over the people. That led the Aryanised Tamils to accept the Ahamic Siva as their God while pure Aryans preferred the authority of the *Vedas*. In course of time a compromise became inevitable and the result was the raise of *Vaidika Saiva* and the union rather effected an intolerant attitude to counter Buddhistic and Jain influence. The cult of Siva gained a prestige almost parallel to that of Vishnu and the character of Hindu philosophy under the unwearied activity of the great Sankara and others was transformed by a counter-reformation which retreated the reforming creeds of Buddhism and Jainism. In the eighth century, the influence of Pallava architecture with its stone temples found its way from Tamilnad to Kerala and the subsequent evolution of a hybrid style in which wooden structures of ancient form were raised on masonry foundations and low supporting walls.

The earliest known structural temples[120] in Kerala rose at the time when Kulasekhara Varma and Rajasekhara Varman were rulers of the later Cheras in the first quarter of the 9th century. This is based on an inscription at the Siva temple in Kandiyur, Alleppey district which is dated to the 123rd year of

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120. On the strength of the Mandakappattu inscription of Pallava king Mahendravarman (600-630 A.D) it is argued that till the 7th century, there were only temples of brick and not of rock in South India. It was Mahendra Varma who heralded the construction of rock-cut temples (excavating cave temples in rocks) like Mahendravalli (Kanchipuram), Talavannur (Pondicherry), Vallam (East of Kanchi), Pallavaram, Tiruchirappally, Memandur etc. His successor, Narasimhavarman introduced building of temples he known out of rocks. They were known as *Rathas* There are eight such temples at Mahabalipuram. The *Sahadevaratha* which is apsidal in shape is considered as the model for the *Mukkalvattam* or *Tali* temples found in Kerala. The construction of temples out of pieces of rocks (structural) began by Rajasimha of Kanchipuram at the dawn of 8th century with the constructin of Kailasanatha and Nandivarman (731-795) built great many structural temples such as Mukheswara, Matangeswara, Veeramaneswara, Vadamalleswara, Parasurameswara etc. Not long afterwards the massive temples built of rock appeared in Kerala known locally *Talis*, or *Mukkalvattams* or *Koyils*. These terms are used in the Nedumpuram Tali inscription of A.D. 1056.

the God of Kandiyur[121] or 823 A.D., during the reign of Rajasekhara. There are records to show that Parthivapuram temple and the Ayirur temple were built in 868 A.D. and 973 A.D. respectively. The cave temple of Tripparappu dedicated to Siva is said to have been built by the Ay King Sri Vallabha in A.D. 857[122]

The Siva temple of Tiruvanchikkulam (Kodungallur) attained fame during the period as the resort of the Chola prince who is believed to be the father of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. With no ancestral throne to look forward he worshipped the Siva in this temple as Nataraja of Chidambaram, the tutelary deity of his family. It is said that he gained many *Siddhis* or miraculous powers by such prayers. He used to hear at the end of daily worship the rhythmic tinkling of the Lord's anklets as if he danced at Chidambaram. He was known as *Kazharirrarivar* Nayanar as he could at once say from the cry of every animal what it wanted.[123] The Vishnu temple at Trichambaram in Cannanore district referred to in *Mushakavamsa* dating in origin to the 10th to 11th century was another temple of this period. *Mushakavamsa* informs us that king Vallabha II renovated this temple Cheraman Perumal Nayanar's *Tirukkaileyajnanaula* is in praise of Vadakkumnathan of Trichur. The Koodalmanikkam temple at Irinjalakuda . a place closely associated with the later Cheras and where there is a stone inscription belonging to the 11th regnal year of the king Stanu Ravi (885) seems to have emerged during this period. The Mampally Plate of *Kollam Era 149 (974 A.D)* records donation of land to Chengannur temple in Pathanamthitta district leading to the conclusion that it was also built during this period. The Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple

121. T.A.S. Vol. I, Part XVI, pp. 289—91. This view is not shared by all. Judged by the relationships with contemporary accomplishments of neighbouring cultures essential to all artistic developments, the earliest temples are very much part of the main Dravidian traditions of South India when Kerala and Tamilnad were a single language zone. (Temple Arts of Kerala. Ronald Bernier, New Delhi, 1982, p. 24).

122. Kerala Society Papers, Trivandrum. 1928-32, pp 50-51

123. Sekkizhar, *Cheraman Perumannayanar Puranam*, stanza, 16

at Trivandrum is said to have been set up by a Tulu Brahmin hermit named Divakara Muni[124]. The *Skanda Purana* cites this temple as a place of pilgrimage like Kumbhakonam, Ayodhya, Tiruppathi, Konarak etc. The Vaishnavite shrines of Tiruvanvandur, Tiruvaranmulai, Tiruvalla, Trikkodithanam, Trikkakkara etc., were consecrated or grew in importance during this period. Most of these shrines which figure among the 13 *Divya Desoms* of *Malainadu* were visited by saints and devotees from the East Coast. Nammalvar and Tirumangai Alvar have sung hymns in praise of the contemporary Vaishnavite shrines in Kerala. In short "the fervorous imagination of passionate saints, poets and people created a rich heritage of unique temples, built like domestic houses with ample courtyards and tiled conical roofs"[125]. Kerala's peculiar temple architecture owe much resemblance to *Nalukettu* and *Ettukettu* of the Nayar houses. These are according to *Vastu Sastra* rules of mud-rock, stone, wood, and thatch or tiles, and in this way they relate to temples[126]. They present what Stella Kramrisch calls *purely Kerala shapes* with their high sloping roofs and angular silhouettes.[127] in temples, mosques, palaces and Churches. The directions given in the *Vastuvidya*, the *Silparatna* and the *Tantrasamuchaya* and other works are followed in the construction of these structures.

The Kulasekhara period (800 - 1100 A. D.) is perhaps most eventful in Kerala History for the diffusion and consummation of temple design. The period marked the rapid establishment of temple complexes under Brahmin guidance in all parts of

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124. In a song of Nammalvar, *Tiru-ananda-puram* (some interpret this as shrine of Him who gives *Ananda* or happiness to Lakshmi) and found repeated as *Syanandara (Sri-ananda-pura, syananduru)* in the *Varahapurana* and the *Syananduraparana-samucchaya*. The present name *Tiru-ananta-puram* meaning the shrine of Him who reposes on serpent *Ananta* as his bed, is a later corruption which began to appear as early as 1755

125. Mulk Raj Anand-Splendours of Kerala. Marg. Publications.

126. Temple Arts of Kerala. Ronald Bernier, New Delhi, 1982, p 6.

127. Arts and Crafts of Kerala. Kramrisch Stella, J.H. Cousins and R. Vasudeva Poduval, p.19.

Kerala. Hinduism and the Bhakti cult gained stupendous dimensions in the worship of Vishnu and Siva and the deities of Subrámanya, Krishna, Sasta and Bhagavathy. People from all walks of life from ruler down to the common man vied with each other to endow these temples with properties and the management both of the temples and its properties placed on a regulated footing. The onus of responsibility was entrusted to committees called *Parisha* and *Sabha*. The members of the committee mostly brahmins were called *Aryar*. The daily administration of the temple was entrusted on *Poduval* or Secretary. The tenure of the committee was fixed. In the southern parts of Kerala these executive committees were known as *Variyams*. The temple committees were subordinate to the authority of the respective local representative assemblies. The *Desavazhi* and *Naduvazhi* also had certain special powers for the temples. The supreme authority in regard to the administration of the temples centred round the *koyiladhikari* or *Purakoyma* who had a very high position and extensive powers. In status the *Koyiladhikaris* were a via media between the rulers and the chieftains. Generally the crown prince was chosen as *koyiladhikari*. However only persons of royal lineage were eligible for this position. The *Bhashakautaliya* lays down that *koyiladhikari* as equal to twelve ministers. During the time of Sthanu Ravi, his son-in-law Vijayaragadevan was the *koyiladhikari*. When Ayyanadigal, king of Venad granted certain privileges to the Tarisapalli in A. D. 849, Vijayaragadevan, the *koyiladhikari* was present as the representative of Sthanu Ravi. There are inscriptions which testify to the authority of *koyiladhikari*[127] to appoint the chieftains of Venad, Odanad and other kingdoms. Govardhana Marthandan of Venad was appointed

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128. The supreme authority of the *koyiladhikari* over the temples seems to have suffered a set back consequent on the invasion of Rajendra Chola in A.D. 1028 after which the time Brahmins became the trustees of the temples known by the name *Taliyathiris Devasthanam* and *Brahmadeyan* also originated during this period. The residence of the *Taliyathiris* came to be known as *Talis* eg., Metali, Keezhtali, Chingapurathutali and Nediyatali representing the Nambood**i**ri trustees of Moozhikkalam, Airanikalam, Iringadikoodal and Paravoor respectively. In course of time *Tali* came to be applied even to temples eg., Ramantali, Nedumpuratali, Arattali (meaning the temple of king) of Kodungallur. Taliparambu etc.

to rule over Nanruzhalnad by the *koyiladhikari* of Bhaskara Ravi Varma (962–1019). That the rulers were very keen to become the controlling authorities of famous temples is amply borne out from the case of Mamamkam at Tirunavay where the rulers of Kerala vied with one another to secure the right to preside over the ceremonies. We have also the case of the *Yogathiripad* the human representative of the deity reading out the *Tirthola* or holy palm leaf showing the daily income and expenditure before the temple was closed at night. The inscriptions of the age give details of the arrangements and rules regulating the authority and activities of the temple committees. The *Muzhikkulam kacham* (code) is of supreme importance in the history of the management of temples in Kerala. In the ninth century the chieftains, members of temple committees and the *koyiladhikari* met at *Muzhikkulam* and framed rules and regulations for the effective management of temples on a uniform basis. We do not know the exact nature of these regulations. But certain inscriptions clearly make it obligatory that the trustees (Uraler) would be punished according to the gravity of the offence for the misappropriation of temple property and also tenants *(karalar)* who failed to pay rent in due time. Kadamkattu *kacham*, Kottuvayiraveli *kacham*, Tavanur *kacham* and Sankaramangalam *Kacham* are some of the other *kachams* mostly drafted on the lines of the Muzhikkulam *kacham* referring to the rules for the administration of temple properties and the relations of landlords and tenants of these properties. Invariably the Muzhikkulam *kacham* is referred to in all inscriptions of the period discovered all over Kerala. The Tirunelli inscription and the inscription recorded on the pillar of the Tirunanthikara Cave temple show that this code was accepted from the northernmost to the southernmost ends of Kerala. A host of inscriptions mentioning the code have been discovered from places like Navaylkulam, Tiruvanvandur, Tiruvella, Kaviyoor, Kumaranalloor and Trikkakara. The *Mussad Uralars* who were trustees of the Tali temple, one and a half mile from Tiruvalayangad played a dominant role in the fight between Kolathiri and Zamorin and this incident is a clear indication of also the political power commanded by the temple authorities. The reason for the dispute between the Zamorin and the Kolathiri was for the *koyma* rights in the Talipparamba

temple. The Variyams of Attiyara, Kuvakkara, Kollur Attiyara and Muttavila Neythaseri are examples.

Rise of Temple Arts:

The period witnessed the emergence of a new order essentially based on a new synthesis of the Aryan and Dravidian culture. Life in almost all the important towns of that period — Suchindram, Parthivapuram, Kanthalur, Trivandrum, Quilon, Kandiyur, Tiruvanvandur, Tiruvella, Perunna, Trikkodithanam, Trikkakara, Muzhikulam, Trichur, Sukapuram, Tirunelly etc. — centred round the temples. Temple festivals were instituted with the ulterior motive of making the Hindu religion more deep rooted in the minds of the people. Of these festivals, the *Mahamagha* (Mamamkam) conducted at Tirunavai on the banks of the Bharathapuzha and the *Onam*[129] festival of Trikkakara near Ernakulam were the most reputed. Tirunavai was once famous for the Pan-Kerala Assembly called *Mamamkam*. In ancient days the annual festival of Tirunavai Temple dedicated to Mahavishnu was celebrated for one month from the *Puyam* or 8th asterism in the solar month of *Makaram* to the *Makam* or the 10th asterism in the following month of *Kumbhom*. Once in twelve years the festivals known *Mahamagha* was held which was considered as most sacred because of the *Arattu* or immersion of the Lord's image in the river on the *Makam* day. It was believed that the waters of the holy Ganges flew into river on this occasion and people from distant parts of Kerala used to come to Tirunavai for the festival. It was at first celebrated by the Chera rulers and after their exit, the Vellatri (Valluvanad Raja) took their place as *Rakshapurusha* or protector and thereafter by the Zamorin. The last *Mamamkam* was celebrated in 1766. The *Onam* festival in the month of *Chingom* was celebrated in the Trikkakara temple dedicated to *Vamana*, the fifth incarnation of *Vishnu*. The Edappalli (a

129. Reference has already been made to the Onam festival in the city of Madurai during the time of Nedumchezhuan as referred to in *Madurai kanchi*. This festival celebrated as religious one in honour of the deity of *Mayoon (Vishnu)* during the Sangam time might have been later adopted as a temple festival by the Brahmins. However the earliest available record abut this festival is an inscription of Sthanu Ravi (T.A.S. Vol. II. Inscription No. 89)

principality in the vicinity of Cochin) chiefs were its priests on account of their matrimonial alliance with the princesses of *Perumpadappu Swaroopam* or Cochin Royal house. The annual *Onam* festival became important for the royal families. The temple was endowed from every part of Kerala and in course of time it was prescribed as the duty of the temple tenants of ancient Kerala to attend to its annual celebration. Those living far away celebrated the festival in their own homes if they could not be present at Trikkakara. It was thus that the Trikkakara festival of Onam became the genesis of the national festival of Kerala. Even though the *Mahamagha* festival has become extinct *Onam* is still celebrated as the national festival of Kerala. Similar festivals were instituted in other temples too and they provided an opportunity to the people for the expression of their spiritual cravings. These festivals gave a fillip to trade and business activity.

Many art forms were evolved to attract people to the temples as a part of the revivalist movement. The ritualistic art forms like koothu and Koodiyattom were prominent among them. The *koothu* staged by *Sakkaimarayans* was known as *Aryankoothu*. Besides there was the ancient dance-drama of *Tamizhakoothu* prevalent from very ancient times in Tamilnadu. There is a section of scholars who believe that the modern chakkyarkoothu was a version of the old *Salkkaikoothu* transformed in such a way as to conform to the requirements of religious propaganda. The *Koodiyattom* grew as a form of art in the 9th and 10th centuries in close association with the temples. This dance-drama was staged in the temples for the diffusion of religious knowledge following the example of the Gangas, Pallavas and the Rastrakutas who undertook such art performances in temples.[129] Tolan who lived in the court of a Kulasekhara king is accredited as the reformer of *Koodiyattom*. The performance of *Koothu* and *Koodiyattom* were governed on the guide lines given by Tolan in his Attaprakarms or

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129. These performances were highly ritualistic and magical in content and intended to serve almost as trance dances combining in themselves an harmonious fusion of music, dance and drama highly spectacular and colourful. The *Natyashastra* is the oldest treatise on the performing arts.

kramadipika. They are purely instructional treatises. Tolan played a great role in the development of *Koodiyattom* and he was the author of the first manuals. The institution of *Koothambalam* for holding the *koothu* performance originated during this period. The *Koothambalam* or the temple theatre was within the *Prakara.* The theatre usually consists of a rectangular space with a stage elevated from the floor having a separate roof. In some cases shiny round columns support the pyramidal interior roof "and a portable shrine with sculptural images and colour prints of Krishna, lamps and offering vessel..... set up on the front of the stage"[130] as seen in the Tiruvegappura Sankaranarayana temple, Palghat. Clifford Iones notes that the Koothambalam architecture is unique to Kerala "in many ways capturing the essential soul of the region"[131] The *Kuthambalam* is, in fact, "one of those religio-cultural adjuncts of Kerala temple life, introduced by the genius of the local people who are adepts in gesture drama, whose another flowering is *Kadhakali.*"[132]

The stories selected for the *Koothu* (recitals) were from the Puranas, since the aim was the inculcation of devotion. The *Chakyars* were the bards who gave the recitals for the Brahmins and other elite and therefore they used Sanskrit

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130. Bernier, opp.cit p.72.

131. The following is a graphic description of a typical, *Koothambalam* by Clifford Jones—the typical *Kuthambalam* plan as a rectangular great hall that encloses a second *mandapa* that is always square. Entrances divide the side walls on an axis into two main areas of the interior, with the number of doors not always limited to two. The stage has four pillars, with its forward edge always beginning at a line just above the central point of the total structure, a point that is directly below the central *stupi* at the converging axis of the four cardinal directions. There are usually 16 minor columns and 24 outer columns supporting the theatre superstructure. Grillwork walls allow air to circulate within the large interior space. The walls may be slanted outward with horizontal slats, creating a basket-like interior

132. K. V. Soundara Rajan, Temple architecture in Kerala, p. 21. The *Silappathikaram*, the Tamil epic of the post Sangam period refers to the performance of *koothu* in the theatre hall by one Kutta Sakkaiyan of Paraiyur (where men learned in the 4 Vedas lived) in order to entertain the Chera king Shenkuttuvan and his Queen.

verses. The Chakyars compiled connected narratives of selected stories with verse and prose sequences taken from many Sanskrit texts. These compilations were called *Prabandha*. The two most important that have come down to us are the *Bharatha Prabandha* and *Ramayana Prabandha*. The main sources were the Sanskrit *Kavyas* and dramas and later the Ramayana *Champu* of Bhoja of the 11th century the *Balabharata Mahakavya* of Agastya Bhatta of the 14th century and the *Bharatha Champu* of Ananta Bhatta of the 16th century. The *Koothu* was a tradition which either splintered off from the full-fledged dramatic presentation of *Koodiyattom* or grew up as a parallel form. The *Koothu* can be considered as a proto-dramatic form.

The temples of the period reveal the high level of perfection in sculpture and painting. We learn from the descriptions about the *Kollippavi* by the Sangam poets that the sculpture of the Chera country attained a superb mastery in the various forms of that art. This tradition has been handed down to generations culminating in sculpture, painting, engraving and frescos in the temples of the 9th and 10th century. The female figure carved in a pillar in worshipping posture believed to be the mother of Sree Vallabhan Kothai's mother in the Devi Devaswaram temple constructed by her in the 10th century is another example of the sculptural genius of the people of Kerala. We have already alluded to some specimens of the 9th century rock-cut cave temples found at Kallil, Chithral, Kaviyur, Tirunandikkara, Trikkur etc. The style of these sculptures reflect to a large extent the Pallava-Pandya influence. They possess cave pillars and relief sculpture of a very high order. A characteristic feature of the structural temples of 10th and 11th century is that they represent the common Dravida type in essentials, the only difference perhaps is in the roofing technique adopted to withstand the fury of the Malabar monsoon. In fact except for the roof there is no Kerala idiom in the construction of the temples of the period as contended by Stella Kramrisch and others. The Kottukal Siva Temple hewn out of cliff-sides had been cut like the well known *rathas* of Mahabalipuram. The figure of the bearded *Rishi* in the Kaviyur temple has been compared to the famous 'Descent of the Ganges' at Mahabalipuram.

The stone carvings of the temples exhibit a high level of

artistic perfection though sculpture formed only a subordinate place in the temple architecture. The earliest specimens of sculpture in stone are seen in the three stone figures of the cave temple at Kaviyur, the rock-cut reliefs at Vizhinjam; the Dakshinamurthi in the cave temple at Iruvilakode near Shoranur, a group of images carved on the overhanging rock of the Bhagavathi temple on the Tiruchanattumalai at Chithral, the images in the Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil (now in Tamilnad), and the rock-cut temple at Kallil and the ruined temples known as Chakkiar-kundam and Pallikkunnu in Palghat and the stone image of Vishnu as Varadaraja (now kept in the Trichur Archaeological Museum) from Badagara in Calicut etc. The stone carvings in the Edakkal cave near Sultan's battery in South Wynad depicting human and animal figures and objects of human use and *Swasthikas*, symbols of sun and magic squares have been executed by scraping the hard surface of the rocks. Even though the exact date of these carvings examined by Fawcett (1896 A.D), R.C. Temple (1899 A.D), Dr. Hultzsch (1896 A.D), Bruce Foote (1897 A.D), Collins Meckenzie (1890 A.D)[133] cannot be determined with any degree of accuracy.

Devadasi System

The institution of *Devadasis* (dancing girls attached to the temples) in the temples of Kerala is usually ascribed to the Kulasekhara period. The *Devadasis* played a pre-dominant role in promoting dance, music, and other fine arts. That *Devadasis* had a very high status in society is amply corroborated by the action of none else than Kulasekhara Alwar presenting his own daughter as a *Devadasi* before the Lord of Srirangam. *Devadasis* were referred to under various names such as *Tevardiyal*,* *Tevadiyal* and *Adigal* in inscriptions of the period. *Kizhanadigal*, the daughter of Stanu Ravi Varma

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133. Indian Antiquary, Vol. XXVIII, 1899, pp. 509–21.

* It is translated as 'Slave of the god.' Litrally it means 'at the feet of the god' and refers to the class of women who through various ceremonies of marriage dedicated themselves to the deities of the temples and other ritual objects. The coloniol literature misused the form 'Caste' in relation to the Devadasis. The terms refers to 'a way of life or professional ethic (*Vrithi* or *Murai*) but not a Devadasi *Jati*.

Kulasekhara used this term to her name. It is doubtful whether this term was used in conjunction with the names of royal maidens to denote their position as *Devadasis* or as marks of respect. We know that this term was also affixed to the names of kings, princesses and saints. There is a contention that the *Parattaiyar* of the Sangam age were the precursors of the *Devadasis* attachedto the temples but there is hardly any mention of this system in the Sangam literature save a solitary citation in *Pattinipalai* of certain damsels who had been brought as spoils of war having been entrusted with the work of tending the lamps in the temple at *Kaveripoompattinam*. However this should not be taken as conclusive proof of equating *Parattaiyar with Devadasi*,who became common in South Indian temples only in the 7th century A.D. as revealed from the inscriptions. We learn from inscriptions that even Kings and nobles did not consider it *infra-dig* to marry *Devadasis*. The degeneracy in the position of the *Devadasis* seems to be a development probably subsequent to the 12th or 13th century[134]. The honorific Devadasi like the *Pattathanam* was a *Kazhagam* with remuneration attached to it Abu Zaid writing in 930 A.D. records that *Devadasis* gave to the temples their entire earnings. They deemed it a 'sacred duty to raise resources for the temples. The earliest known inscription in Kerala referring to the Devadasi system is found in an inscription in the Chokkur temple in Ponnani in Malabar of K.E.107 (A.D. 932) An inscription dated K.E. 215 (A.D.1040) in the *Guhanantha swamy* temple in Kanyakumari records the munificent endowment by the Devadasi,

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134. Even as late as 1225 A D the consort of Veerakerala Varma of Venad was one *Kandiyur Tevadichi Unnikkalatram*. The *Sivavilasm* pictures *Cherukarakutati*, the wife of Eravi Kerala Varma of Odanad as 'the first among the dancing girls." The favourite of the many wives of Krishnadeva Raja of Vijayanagar was one Chinna Devi who was a *Devadasi*. Even Sundaramoorthi Nayanar's wife *Puravaiyar* was a *Devadasi*. Chokkathandal, wife of Veera Pandya made a generous gift of 200 gold coins to the temple of Suchindram and the amount was entrusted to the *Devadasi Kunrandi Tiruvandi* as may be gathered from the inscription in the temple dated Dhanu. 9, 432 (1256 A.D.). Coming to later times we find Eravi Varma, the Trippappur Mooppan making endowments to the same temple and entrusting its management to the Perumal Rayan prominent among the *Devadasis* of the time. The inscription in the Suchindram temple shows that a theatre and various *mandapams* were endowed by *Devadasis*

Kandan Cholan. The *Devadasi* system might have been introduced in Kerala in the time of the Cholas. The inscriptions from the 10th century A.D. lead us to the conclusion that the system had become an adjunct of the temple establishment at least by that century. The Tiruvalla temple inscription makes mention of four posts of *Devadasis*. The inscription dated *Medam 8, 393 K.E. (1218 A.D) in the Kandiyoor temple laid* down that the various rituals and ceremonies were decided upon by Eravi. Kerala Varma of Venad and Iraman Kotha Varma of Odanad in consultation with Unni, the Devadasi of Kandiyoor who was the wife of Kerala Varma of Venad as already stated. The Subrahmoniaswamy Koil in the Suchindram temple ws also built by this pious *Devadasi* as referred to in an inscription in the temple dated *Medam* 5, 413 K.E. (1238 A.D). It may be recalled here that many of the heroines in the *Manipravala kavyas* - the *Unniyacchi charitham, Ilayacchi kavya, Unnunili-sandesa* etc. - are *Devadasis*. The moral degneration of the *Devadasi* system was the result of Nambudiri ascendancy in the management of the temples and temple properties The *Suka-sandesa, Sivavilasa, Mayuradutha* in Sanskrit and the *Chandrol-savam* show that this degeneration touched its nadir in the course of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries Poets vied with one another in eulogising hetaira and a classical example is Punam Nampoothiri's epistles on *Maralekha*. The *Vaisisika Tantram* by an unknown Kerala author deals with the art of hetaira and is patterned after *Kuttam-Mata* (Advice of a Procuress) of Damodara Gupta of Kashmir. The sculptures and paintings in the walls of many temple in Kerala demonstrate the dexterous skill acquired by the *Devadasis* in dancing and the author of the *Sivavilasa* exquisitely portrays that it would seem as if the Gods sedulously enamoured and made senseless by the mighty dances of *Devadasis* took their permanent abode on the walls of temples as pictures. The *Devadasis* were considered as 'hand maidens' of the deities. It is even contended that the *Manipravala* movement in Malayalam literature owed its very origin to the *Devadasi* system. Abbe J.A. Dubois mentions that in the early phase the *Devadasis* associated only with Brahmins. Buchanan who travelled extensively in Malabar in the beginning of the 19th century has recorded that when Brahmin widows became *Devadasis* they could associate with

either Brahmins only or with all the higher castes, the latter choice involving the payment of a separate and additional tax. The *Devadasis* had the right and obligation to receive the rulers of Travancore whenever the latter visited their area and to keep them company till they left the region[135].

Education and learning

The institution of the *Salai* or the *Ghatikai* attached to temples assumed a key role in the fostering of Aryan culture and political power. The character and operation of these institutions as revealed in the documents of the Ay kings has already been discussed. The *Parthivasekharapuram Salai*, the *Kanthalur Salai* and the *Sreevallabha Perumsalai* established by the Ay kings continued to flourish under the Chera rule as well. Among the other far reputed *Salais* under the Kulasekharas were the *Tiruvalla Salai* and *Moozhikkalam Salai*. *Salais* like *Sukapuram Salai*, Tirumaruthoor *Salai*, *Tirunelly Salai*, Kottarakkara *Salai* are mentioned in later records. The records reveal that the kings and noble men endowed properties for the maintenance of *Salais*. All the expenses of the deities were borne by the *Salai*. The vast majority of the inscriptions refer to the donation of extensive landed properties, especially paddy fields to the temples with the specific stipulation that the harvest be utilised for feeding the students of the *Vedas*. Nammalvar's *Tiruvaimozhi* song constituting of eleven stanzas mentions of the Vedic chanting and sacrificial smoke in the temple of Tiruvalla, the old name of which was *Mallika Vanam* (Jasmine grove)[136]. The *Tiruvalla Salai* attached to the Vishnu temple of Tiruvalla provided instruction for hundreds of Brahmin youths. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates mention that 350 measures of rice were used exclusively for the feeding of Vedic students *(chatras)* at noon in the Tiruvalla *Salai*. The Copper Plates lay down that "as soon as offerings were made to the deity the same should be given to the '*Chatras*; the *Chatras* should be supplied with 11 coconuts; 9 *Nalanjus* of tamarind and one *ulakku* of salt[137]. An *Aturasala* (hospital) was also maintained for the

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135. A History of Malayalam Literature, Krishna Chaitanya, New Delhi. 1971.p.51.
136. Annals and Antiquities of Tiruvalla, Kerala Society Papers. Series. 2, p. 85.
137. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. II, p. 136.

treatment and medical care of the students and priests attached to the temples. There were vedic residential Schools called Othuttumadam attached to the Tiruvalla temple. The Cheranallur village is known as *Bhattatiri grama* meaning the village of learned Brahmins. Kizhmalanattu Maluvakkom, Mulayil Nayathiyar and others had donated large areas of paddy fields yielding thousands of paras of paddy per year to the Moozhikkalam and Tiruvalla *Salais*. Such lands were tax free. In the *Unniyachchi Charitam* (2nd half of the 13th century) the *Gandharva* youth who came down to the earth to meet Unniyachchi found many *chatras* among the profligates crowding the residence of *Unniyachchi*. The Pattas (Nambudiri teachers) referred in *Unniyadi Charitam* and the *Chattiras* in the *Chandrolsavam* were originally the professors of the Salas. *Pattathanam* was the term used to denote the position and considered to be the highest honour coveted by the scholars of the day. We are told that learned debates used to be conducted in the temples for the selection to Pattathanam or professorship. The records of the Manalikkara and Padmanabhapuram temples refer to *Pattaviruthi* tax exempted for lands gifted for scholars who got *Pattathanam*. The *Pattars* of the *Salais* were the expert swordsmen also[138]. The Trikkodithanam inscription of 992 informs us that *Pattathanam* was not hereditary, even though in course of time they became inherited.

It is presumed that after the Chera-Chola war, the *Salais* which were in a flourishing condition disappeared and the Brahmins who were controlling the lands given to the *Salais* as

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138. K. P. Padmanabha Menon says : "It will be remembered that the patron saint of the Nambudiris, Parasu Rama, was himself a Brahmin of the militant type.........That the study of Vedas and the practice of religious austerities are not incompatible with the profession of arms is clearly indicated by the fact that the instructors in arms of both the Cochin and Travancore Rajas are Brahmins of the Vedic class and these enjoy to the present day the emoluments and privileges attached to their office, though the Rajas have left off the exhilarating study of the use of weapons. In Cochin, the office is hereditary in the family of Peramangalath Nambudiri who is officially styled Peram Patta Panikkar......It is said that, in former times, every Peram Patta Panikkar had to vindicate his title to his office by having an open fight, sword in hand, with a royal tiger (History of Kerala, III, p. 59).

grants expropriated them into their hands and the Pattas by their licentious and luxurious lives became subjects of ridicule. The annual *Pattathanams*[139] or. gifts to learned men following a seven days' conference and competition in various branches of philosophy and allied subjects was a remnant of this old practice. Besides the regular educational institutions attached to the temples there were endowments constituted for specifice purpose of narration of puranic stories in the temple complex. One such renowned institution was the *Mahabharata Pattathanam*. A Brahmin well versed in Sanskrit was appointed in every temple to give exposition of the *Mahabharatha* stories. This was part of a literary tradition and marked the beginning of a new sensibility which permeated the literary, musical and artistic development for over a period of 7 centuries. The *Mahabharatha* and the *Ramayana* thus got embedded in the whole of India with as many as 1600 textual modifications and with the phenomenon of translations and imitations and interpretations like the *Adhyatma Ramayana* of Thuncheth Ramanujan Ezhuthachan. Concurrently with these the *Chakkyar Koothu* became an important vehicle of popular education and religious enlightenment. The *Chakkyar Koothu* was one of the chief elements of enjoyment which afforded intellectual nourishment to the devotees. The eloquence of the Chakkyar enthralled his audiences and "hundreds of people stream forth delighted and enlightened, and with calm mind, all passions spent". A portion

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139 Of greater importance than individual royal patronage was the Zamorin's annual *Pattathanam*, or gifts to learned men. Founded some time in the fourteenth century, it was continued down to A. D. 1925. Before the Mysorean occupation the *Pattathanam* was a grand Festival of Learning. Lasting for seven days, in the month of *Tulam* (*Libra*), from the last asterism, *Revati*, to the sixth, *Tiruvatira*, and concluding with the admission of new members to the *Tanam* every one of whom received from now onward, a purse containing 101 *Fanams*, like the others. The first six days were devoted to discourses, discussions, and disputations, in the Tall temple, nominally in the four *Sastras*, *Vyakarana*, *Kumarila Mimamsa*, *Prabhakaramimamsa*, and *Vedanta*, but really in every branch of learning. Mullappalli Bhattathiri was the permanent *Adhyaksha* or President, and the new members, chosen by consensus for the *Tanam* were presented by him to the Zamorin. It is said that the claims of Melputtur Narayana Bhattatiri were rejected six times before he was given a place in the Zamorin's *Vidvatsabha*, so rigorous was the test, and so high the standard'

of the pagoda was especially set apart for his performance and it was the *Koothambalam* having elaborate and complicated workmanship with massive pillars representing scenes in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha* and other *Puranas*. In the centre of the raised dais, the Chakkyar sat on a wooden throne and delivered his performances. The *Chakkyar Koothu* was by far and undoubtedly the most popular institution of Kerala. There were also attached to the temples *Grandhapuras* and *Patasalas* with good collections of books on subjects of diverse interests.

The Trichur and Tirunavai Sabha *Mutts* initiated and trained Nambudiris in the Rig and other *Vedas*. The Kadavallur tests known as *Anyonyam* was considered as one of highest honour in the sphere of religious instruction. The annual *Vedic* competitions at Kadavallur temple was an arena to test the proficiency of the trainees in *Rig Veda*.

Marumakkathayam or Matrilineal system

According to some historians the changes that appeared in the economic system and in ways of life after the Chera-Chola war led to the evolution of Matrilineal system or *Marumakkathayam* in Kerala. The political and religious ascendancy of the Brahmins *(Nampoothiris)* during the Chola-Chera war, their rise as landlords or *Jenmies* of Kerala, the introduction of compulsory military training and the formation of suicide squads *(Chavettu pada)* to meet the threats of warfare are attributed as the peculiar conditions that necessitated the change in the system of inheritance and successions during this period[140]. But this view is not shared by all. They contend that *Marumakkathayam* began in Kerala only in the 14th century as none of the early foreign travellers ever did make any reference to this peculiar law of inheritance which they would have never missed;

140. The Chera-Chola war which is depicted as Hundred Year's war by Prof. Elamkulam cannot be accepted as such for obvious reasons. It was never a continuous and uninterrupted one which was spread over for a sufficiently long period of 100 years. The *Chavettu Sena* or the Suicide Squads were not in existence on a pan Kerala basis. It cannot therefore be assumed that the so called Hundred Year's War served as the basic factor in adopting matriliny.

had it been in existence during their visits. Epigraphical evidence point to the fact that till the 12th century A.D. the system of inheritance followed was patrilineal. The Tiruvanvandur inscription of the 10th century, the Kavlyur inscription of 951 A.D., the Perunna inscription of 1080 A.D., the Tiruppalkkadal inscription of the 12th century A.D. and the Tirupparappu inscription of the 9th century and a host of others, all indicate the prevalence of the patrilineal system. Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai is one of the view that the injunction of the *Keralolpathi* to consolidate royal power by "begetting son with Namboodiri seed" could not be followed without *Marumakkathayam. The Brahmins of Payyannur Gramam and some Nayar families may* have adopted the system during the early years of the 10th century. To quote him: "It would not have been difficult to introduce the system among all the Nayars, who had to live constantly in the battle-field and who were the henchmen of the Nambudiris. The Ezhavas, Nanchinad Vellalas[141], Kanikkars and low caste Nairs later followed the higher castes in adopting *Marumakkathayam* But they never fully gave up the old system. of inheritance and succession"[142]. Ehrenfels observes: 'The traditional integration of mythology, religion and ritual as well as the complex social organisation of matriliny or mother-right in Kerala suggest a comparatively early origin of this system there. This hypothesis further corroborated by the internal similarities of this pattern with matri-focal features all over Dravidian - speaking South India and the northern parts of Ceylon[143]. The hypothesis that matriliny had been imposed on the Nayar and related castes by Nampoothiri Brahmins in order to suit the convenience of their second and subsequent sons can be dismissed for a variety of reasons among which the presence of the same system among Highlanders should be

141. According to K. K. Pillai, the *"Marumakkalvali Vellalas"* originated with the triumph of Kota Varma (A D. 1102—1125) of Venad over Nanchinad in 1106 A. D. and his policy of popularising the matrilineal system (The matrilineal system of Inheritance, Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. I, S 2&3, p. 187)

142. Studies in Kerala History, opp.cit p. 323.
143 Quoted in German Scholars on India, Vol. I, Varanasi, 1973, p. 56.

noted, who are in no marital relationship, institutionally connected with Nampoothiri Brahmins[144] second and subsequent younger sons according to Nampoothiri tradition married girls from the matrilineal castes according to the *Sambandham* rite and about this practice Ehrenfels states "socio-psychological and personal relations with their Nayar and similar caste - children were generally close, though the children belonged to their mother's taravad and caste, according to the matrilineal order of succession and inheritance. However younger sons of wealthy Nambudiri Brahmin families could and frequently did, enhance not only the prestige but also the financial situation of their Nayar wives. Naturally the day-to-day life in such families was imbued with Brahmin concepts, rituals and attitudes. In the course of generations, the Nayar and kindred caste groups got biologically assimilated to such an extent that it was difficult for early travellers from the West to differentiate between the two inter-marrying groups"[145].

However earliest reference to matrilineal pattern is by *Sekkilar* in his *Periyapuranam*. He states that Cheraman Perumal had become the ruler of the land according to the *Malanattu* custom of succession. Even though no prominence be given to the date of Cheraman Perumal, it is admitted on all hands that *Sekkilar* compiled his *Periyapuranam* in the first half of the twelfth century and by the time of *Sekkilar* matriliny also became a pattern of succession. But this should not be interpreted to assert that the *Marumakkathayam* system had been introduced in Kerala by one stroke. A period between 11th century and 16th century be fixed as the probable date for the introduction of the system. There was no systematic adoption of the system as revealed from the succession of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (A.D. 1299-1314) who ruled over the territories which he inherited by patrilineal and matrilineal successions. Ravi Varma ruled over Jayasimhanad by virtue of his patrilineal succession as the son of Jayasimha of Chiravai and Venad by virtue of his matrilineal succession as the son of Uma Devi of Kupaka family who was the wife of Jayasimha of Chiravai[146]

145. Ibid, pp. 56–57.

146. A detailed discussion on this subject will be attempted in the Chapter on People.

The age of the later Cheras witnessed the origin of the *jenmi* system in Kerala. We have seen that between 8th and 12th centuries A.D. the Nambudiris had established their undisputed hegemony over the land and people in the various regions of Kerala. Modern historians while dismissing the mythological aspects of the Parasurama legend view that it denotes the arrival of an alien people from the North to Kerala and the subsequent reorganisation of the social and economic set up of Kerala. They link the episode with the origin of the system of landlordship called *jenmom* by which the Nambudiris developed a superior right over land and also to the origin of agrestic slavery[147] which supported that system. *Jenmom* right is said to have originated when Parasurama divided Kerala among the Nambudiri families. Scholars believe that the Nambudiris themselves would have fabricated the legend to impart a touch of divinity to their right over land in Kerala. Prof. Elamkulam is of the view that jenmom right originally meant right during lifetime. According to him it was only by the 11th century it began to mean inheritance right through birth. On a study of the inscriptions in various temples from the 9th to 13th centuries A.D. it becomes clear that before that time most of the land was owned by non-Brahmins. It was during this period that many land owners bestowed land on the Nambudiris and the temples and this paved the way for the origin of *Brahmaswom* (Brahmin's own) and *Devaswom (God's own)*. The economic infra-structure of the society during these centuries centred round the temples. There was nothing social or cultural that was not intimately connected with the temples. When a temple was built it was customary to endow it with the property the revenues of which was meant to defray the expenses of daily worships, festivals, schools, and feeding Brahmins. The management of such property was vested in *Ooralars* which was in the form of a board of trustees. Brahmins were invariably chosen in almost all the cases as *Ooralars*. The records of the 9th 10th and 11th centuries reveal that the *Ooralars* were effectively checked by the *Nattukootams*, local chieftains and

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147. Anthropologists think that the institution of agrestic slavery in Kerala "rose of the conquest of the original owners of the soil by invaders and settlers from the north".

the *Koiladhikari* and specific laws like the *Moozhikulam* code about which references have already been made were there to prevent the misappropriation of temple properties by the Ooralars. But in the years that followed the Chola invasion of Kerala there was all round confusion and the temple properties virtually fell into the hands of the Brahmins. A major portion of the land came into the possession of temples and the Brahmins. The trustees and other officers like the Warrier, Poduval, Mahabharatha Bhattas etc. became hereditary and their powers unlimited and uncontrolled. The trustees tried to evict and supplant tenants who refused to become their obedient vassals. They utilized the opportunity to increase the rents and impose new levies on the tenants.The Brahmins became the monopolists of wealth, power, education and divine will.

Another concomitant of this system was the transformation of the racial and tribalgroups into a caste hierarchy so complex that it created a multitude of endogamous sub divisions. It is said that there were more than hundred such groups among Nayars divided according to the regions and occupations prohibiting even inter marriages. The caste system became deep rooted in Kerala. The economic ascendancy of the Brahmins and their political influence became an unwritten law that the kings who were not Nambudiris should be the sons of Nambudiris. The princes of the royal families were given education in *Smritis* by the Nambudiris and this enabled them to establish and maintain the caste predominance and *Smriti* rule with greater strength and effect. All this resulted in Kerala becoming the worst example of caste division and caste domination in India that in later days the great Hindu reformer Swami Vivekananda castigated Kerala as a "mad house of castes". The regrettable aspect of the caste system in Kerala was the rules governing the distance at which atmospheric and visual pollution took place. The unequal and vertical economic structure cleverly built up by the Brahmins in Kerala resulted in moral degeneration. The practice of endogamous marriage solely for the eldest brother and *Sambandam* system of marriage for the junior members of the Nambudiri families resulted eventually in the practice of fraternal polyandry.

The division of the society on the basis of caste creating special interest groups based on occupation, the strict observance of sacrificial *mantras* and rituals and a host of other divine ordained rituals created a steel frame of society and an organisation of almost incredible complexity. The all-pervading influence of the new social order resulted in the birth of slavery in Kerala. In order to perpetuate the distinction between Aryans and non-Aryans they diligently effected the transformation of the primitive communal society on the basis of occupational identification. The impassable barrier was that of untouchability and enslavement This was a course pursued by other conquering races at various epochs in world history. But the attribution of pollution to members within the same community was indeed one of distinct Indian origin, unlike the Jews and ancient Egyptians who considered those not of their racial origin or religious beliefs as polluting. In a thought provoking observation A.L. Basham writes "Early Tamil literature gives no evidence of caste but the growth of Aryan influence and the development of a more complex political and economic structure produced a system in some ways more rigid than that of the North. By the Chola period an important feature of South Indian Caste structure had appeared, and this has survived to the present day[148]. Scholars like Robert Caldwell,Gustav Oppert, Sundaram Pillai and several others posited the idea that non-Brahmins were Dravidians and the Brahmins were the Aryan invaders from the North. With the Aryanisation of South India, predominant influence of the Brahmins was the chief cause for all social disruption. In course of time all the institutions of the Dravidians were supplanted by an imposed "sanskritic Aryan religion" and caste system. B N. Nayar giving a socio-historical analysis of the Brahmin domination and the anti-Brahmin movement in South India points out how the Brahmin took control of society by introducing in South India religiously and socially the Varnasrama Dharma system and the Aryan deities[149]. The basis of Brahmin dominance in South India however owed their role in the temple cult[150]. What happened was that the Brahmins by emphasising

148. A. L Basham – The Wonder that was India, New Delhi, 1975, p. 151.
149 The Dynamic Brahmin, Bombay, 1959.
150 Anita Diehl, Periyar . E. V. Ramaswami, Bombay, 1978, p. 28.

a Vedic authority for the caste system entrenched themselves at the top of the social hierarchical set up and by sedulously preserving the skill of learning and teaching to themselves as their sole monopoly put all the other castes at their mercy for learning and at their skill[151]. The caste system was the contrivance of the Brahmanical mind by which the Brahmins always sought to maintain their racial superiority at the cost of the non Brahmins. The pernicious effect of the evil brought by the caste system reached its climax when it condemned a set of helpless people as unseeables and untouchables treating them worse than the filthiest animals. The solidification of caste and the disabilities attached to that institution paved the way for the rise of feudalism in Kerala. The administrative structure was feudalised culminating in the rigid political domination of Brahmins and complete servility of lower classes. The Hindu religious texts were cleverly misinterpreted by the ingenuity of the Brahmins to perpetuate their position by providing to the caste system religious sanction and recognition.

The coming of Islam

Islam in India in all probability emerged in Kerala long before it reached the other regions; it came peacefully carried by the sails of trading ships. Although there are hints of Muslim piratical activity on the north west coast of India already at the time of Caliph Omar, the first recorded instance of a permanent Muslim presence in India is Muhammad Ibn Qasim's conquest of Sind (711-715). There is however a strong basis for Nadvi's assertion: "It is an open fact that long before the Muslim settled in northern India, there were colonies in Southern India[152]." The situation arising from the juxtaposition of Kerala's strategic location and the Arab's trading instinct provides that basis. The Arabs were probably the carriers and merchants of the Indian Ocean before anybody else[153]. As Indian and Western maritime

151. A. L. Basham opp. cit. 138 and 152.

152. S. S. Nadvi—"The Muslim Colonies in India before the Muslim Conquests"—Islamic Culture VIII (1934).

153. S. Vincent, Commerce and Navigation of the Ancient in the Indian Ocean II, p. 62, quoted in Ahmed Nafis. "The Arabs knowledge of Ceylon,.. IC. XIX, 1945, p.224.

activity decreased after the fourth century, partly as the result of growing reluctance to leave Indian soil and the fall of the Roman Empire, Arabs from South Arabia and Persians occupied the vacuum engaging in a steadily growing inter-coastal trade. With the exception of a period of decline in the sixth century, "the history of the Arabs on this ocean is one of expanding commerce, which reached its peak in the ninth century of the Christian Era[154]". The interruption of non-Muslim trading activity by the Islamic expansion in West Asia helped the Arabs to gradually strengthen their trading might everywhere and to acquire a virtual monopoly on commerce in the Indian Ocean.

It was natural for the Arabs to make the Kerala Coast their first and chief port of call. Not only was it the nearest halting place, but it was also the source of pepper, the black gold as well as of other valuable products[155].

The link between Kerala and the countries bordering on the Arabian Sea had been continuous and of particular importance. It was a result of this close affinity with Arabia, Egypt and the West that Kerala came to have in its midst a community of Jews and St. Thomas Christians-though no definite date could be assigned to their exact time of arrival. The frequency of contacts with the Arabian coast and traders especially from Muscat and other littoral states of the Arabian Peninsula, became pronounced with the emergence of Islam in Arabian territory. A fairly ancient tradition avers that the last Perumal himself became a convert to Islam, abdicated his throne and left on a pilgrimage from which he did not return. No inherent improbability could be ascribed to this event. But the further details about his partitioning the land of Kerala, and distributing portions to his feudatories and relations are obviously apocryphal. A Muslim inscription in Pantalayini Kollam (present day Quilandy) dated Hijra 166 makes clear the spread of Islam early enough in Malabar by conversion and by the settlement of Arab traders. With the growth of Arab commercial activity under the Khalifs,

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154. Haurani : Arab Sea faring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times (Princeton: University Press, 1951).
155. C. N. Ahmed Maulavi—"Saheehul Bukhari, Calicut, 1970.

Malabar Ports became popular with traders of Muslim capitals. Numerous Arabian travellers, the most notable among whom are Ibn Khurdadbeh (869-885) and Abu Zaid of Zirag (916) mention of Malabar Ports. Ibn Kankal writing in the 10th century speaks of mosques in Kerala where Muslims offered their prayers.

The Muscat traders seem to have been the first to establish themselves firmly at Calicut. An old tradition preserved in the *Keralolpathi* tells the story of a Muslim merchant from that place who deposited with the Zamorin boxes of gold pretending they were only pickles. The Zamorin on discovering that the boxes contained gold, recalled the merchant and handed him back his hoard and the merchant who was greatly impresed by his honesty decided to settle down there. Irrespective of the truth of the matter, it is undoubtedly certain that commencing from the 12th century the Zamorin's relations with Arab traders became intimate and Calicut slowly attained a pre-eminence in the trade of pepper and other spices which made it the greatest entrepot on the West Coast. Gradually the Muslims monopolised the external trade of the coast. It should also be borne in mind that the trade with the West in spices and other luxury articles grew to unprecedented proportions—thanks to the prevalence of *Pax Islamica* in the Middle East, from the Indonesian Archipelago there was a never ending flow of what in Europe was considered more precious than gold and gems and Calicut was the great intermediate port for this trade. Naturally Malabar's own pepper and cardamom and the textiles which were also in great demand were shipped from this port. Consequently, the Zamorin became one of the wealthiest rulers in India and easily the most powerful on the West Coast. He assumed the honorific *Kunnalaikkon*, the lord of the mountains and the sea and gradually diminished the neighbouring chieftains influence to one of subordination.

With the eventual penetration of Islam in the coastal areas, the social structure of Kerala, attained its present form of a system of parallel societies of which the most influential being the Muslims. An indigenous Muslim community grew up around the warehouses and settlements of the Arab Muslim traders stretching from Cannanore in the north but principally confined

to towns. The Mappillas were the descendants of the first Indian Muslims. Their leadership was in the hands of the Arab merchant princes who established themselves at Calicut and Cannanore. Their influence was mainly with the rulers of these two States, whose prosperity was dependent on the export trade in pepper and spices, and was attested by all contemporaries. Ibn Batuta testifies the affluence of the Moors of Malabar and declared that one of their leading merchants "could purchase the whole freightage of such vessels as put in there and fit out others like them,.. The Mamalis and Khoya Musas whom the Portuguese encountered on the coast were merchant princes to whom Cairo and Damascus were as familiar as Calicut and Cannanore.

Though wielding considerable court influence, the Muslims of Malabar refrained from political influence. Zainuddin of Ponnani stated "Notwithstanding that the rulers and their troops were all pagan, they (Muslims) paid much regard to their prejudices and customs and avoided any act of aggression on the Mohammedans except on extraordinary provocation this amicable policy being the more remarkable from the circumstances of the Mahommedans not being a tenth part of the population[156]." He further adds. "I would have it understood that the Mahommedans of Malabar lived in great comfort and tranquility in consequence of their obtaining from exercising any oppression towards the people of the country as well as from consideration which they invariably evinced for the ancient usages of Malabar "[157]

The Muslims believe Cranganore to have been the first place where their religion was taught. According to the tradition preserved in the *Tofutul Mujahideen*, proselytization began very soon after the death of the Prophet; a group of twenty Muslims led by Malik Ibn Dinar arrived in 643 with the intent of preaching religion They were welcomed by the local rulers and in Cranganore they founded the first Mosque in Kerala. But Cranganore with all the history that lends its

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156. Tofutul Mujahideen, Translation, Madras, 1942, p. 76.
157. Ibid. p. 103.

name, is now the least impressive of ancient sites, and though a mosque still stands where Malik Ibn Dinar is said to have built, it is a plain structure without minaret or dome, built in the gabled style which the local Muslims adapted from the basic form of the Kerala Hindu temple and it gives no impression of great antiquity.

In fact the most significant feature of Kerala life from the earliest times has been the wide sense of the tolerance and mutual respect between the different communities who had made their home there. Christian and Muslims, Jews and Konkanis lived side by side with the Kerala Hindus in a state of perfect understanding and amity, respecting each other's customs and prejudices and scrupulously avoiding all interference.

The coming of the Jews

No real records are available to give us any certain information on the early settlements of the Jews in the Malabar coast, except perhaps the Copper Plates Charter granted to them in 1000 A. D. by King Bhaskara Ravi Varman, still preserved by the Jews at Cochin and Ernakulam.

Our knowledge of the first coming of the Jews is tantalizingly vague and uncertain. We do not know it for certain when the Jews came to Malabar. Some European authors of the 19th century ascribed the coming of the Jews to Malabar in 69 A. D. The Dutch Governor Adrian Moens (in his Memorandum of 1781 A. D.) says; 'It is possible that the first batch of Jews came here with the fleet of Solomon, a statement which is accepted by M. Basnage [158] or on the occasion of the leading into captivity of the ten tribes to Assyria by Salmanasser, or on that of the Babylonian captivity of the two tribes under Nebuchadnezar, as Mr. Hamilton will have it. There is not the slightest proof to give these guesses any verisimilitude. On the contrary, according to the general traditions of the Malabar Jews, about 1,000 people arrived in these regions a few

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158. Basnage, Histoiredes Juits, 1705.

years after the destruction of the second temple at Jerusalem. Thus if this account is accepted, it must have happened 70 years after the birth of Christ, when Jerusalem suffered greatly at the hands of Titus Vespasian, or in the year 136, when the said town was completely demolished by order of the Emperor Aclius Badrian, after a rising of the Jews against the Roman Government, and a new town called Aclia Capitolina was built on the same site, within two hour's distance of which town the Jews forbidden on pain of death to approach.

The Jews might perhaps have come in the reign of Solomon who 'had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram, once in three years came the navy of Tharshish bringing gold and silver, ivory, apes and peacocks'. The inseparable resemblance of the Hebrew, Sanskrit and Tamil words for ivory, apes and peacocks may lead one to assert that these articles were obtained from Malabar. Habim and Kafim (koph) of Hebrew are said to be 'IBHA' and the 'KAPI' of Sanskrit and TUKKI (peacock) from togai of Tamil. "The oldest Tamil word found in any written record in the world "Writes Dr. Gundert" appears to be the word for peacock in the Hebrew text of the Books of Kings and Chronicles." Some even point that Ophir from where Solomon got his gold is identical with Beypore. The following extract reproduced from a very old paper in the Secretariat English records, Kerala may also throw light on the above subject.

"After the destruction of the second Temple in 3828th year of Creation, 3168th of Tribulation, 68th of the Christian Era, about 10,00 Jews and Jewessess came to Malabar, and settled themselves at Cranganore, Palloor, Mahadam and Paloothoo; three-fourth population remained at Cranganore, then called Mahodrapatna, and subsequently Chingley under the Government of Chreumproomal".

The settlement deed of the Jews at Cranganore is not attested by the Brahmin hierarchy whereas they have attested the Syrian Copper Plates. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the Jews came here before the rise of Vedic Brahminism on

the Malabar Coast which is placed in the latter half of the Seventh century.[159]

The *Keralolpathy*[160] makes mention of "Jewish Tank" in Payangadi or Palayangadi near which are the ruins of the old forts and palace of the Kolathiris. Mr. Sewell in an article in *the Archaeological Survey of India* states that the tank was probably constructed by a colony of Jews or *Yavanas.*

The Malabar Jewish tradition is that the Jews came to Calicut in A. M. 3830 and to Cochin a thousand years later. This traditional date corresponds to 69 A. D. which is the date given by some European scholars also. The Tamil poems bear testimony to the export of pepper from Malabar ports by Jews. In *Akananuru* a work written in the first or second century A. D. it is stated that *the Yavanas*[161] came in large vessels carrying gold and returned with pepper. Similar passages are found in *Purananuru* and other works of the Sangam age. A Tamil poet speaks amorously about "the cool and fragrant wine brought by the Yavanas in their good ships".

The *Payyannur Pattu*, an ancient Malayalam song of North Malabar is replete with references about the Jews under the name *Anchuvannam. Anju Varner* or *Anchuvannam* is also supposed to mean the fifth caste; as Jews formed a new caste outside the pale of the Hindu system of *Chatur Varna* or that of the famous Brahmana, Kshatrya, Vysia, Sudra of the great law-giver Manu. It is said that vestiges of a Jewish community are found at Palayur near Chowghat. The Tamil song called *Irravikutti Pillai Por* also refers to *Anchuvannam* warriors."[162]

It is even suggested, though the historical veracity is a question of doubt that hymns to *Varuna*, the guardian of *Rita*,

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159. There is a contention that the Jewish deed does not profess to be attested by all the important communities then inhabiting Malabar.

160. Keroloipathi is by no means considered as a source of history.

161 Even though the term Yavana was very often vaguely used it is by no means impossible that the Yavanas of South India included Jews.

162. It is also contended that Anchuvannam in the poem refers to the Hindu caste of weavers and dyers.

the Cosmic order (whose concept is perhaps of the highest flight of Rig Vedic thought) reminding of the penitential psalams of the Old Testament owe much to Semitic influence.[163]

Dr. P. J. Thomas in his article on "Kerala Culture— Its Distinctive Features, states, "the Jews are said to have settled in Malabar as early as the sixth century B. C. and the descendents of the early colonists are even there".

Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (about 264—340 A. D.) points out that Pantaenus of the Catechotical school at Alexandria brought home with him, after his visit to India a Hebrew copy of the Gospel by St. Mathew about the end of the second century A. D. Logan is of the view that the fact that Pantaenus found a Hebrew copy of St. Mathew's Gospel pointed to the probability of the first colony of Christians having been Israelites. Again he says, 'The fact remains to the present day that Jewish colonies are settled on the coast, and if their progenitors, often of course replenished by further immigrations, did not come with King Solomon's fleets, they have at least traditions which carry back their arrival on the coast to the time of their escape from servitude under Cyrus in the sixth century B. C.'.

However the very early intercourse between the East and West makes it possible that the first Jews who arrived on the Malabar coast came in from Solomon's fleet of Merchantmen. Rabbi Banjamin (1107 A. D.) declares that in his day the place (Gingalep, a corruption for Cranganore as used by him) contained about 1,000 Israelites.. ...." no wonder because that way the location of the first Hebrew colony and it remained there till its desolation in 1524 and the final dispersion and emigration to Cochin in 1585[164].

However the earliest document which points to the existence of Jews is the plate of the grant of Bhaskara Ravi Varman I

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163. It is refuted on the ground that the early Hebrews never came into contact with Aryans.

164. Col. Yule points out that the date to identify Cranganore with Gingalep of Rabbi Benjamin are too vauge though the position of that place seems to be in the vicinity of Malabar History of Kerala, Vol. I, K. P. P. Menon.

(962 – 1019 A.D.) dated 1000 A.D. which is to this day preserved by the Jews at Mattancherri and Ernakulam. It records the royal gift to the Jewish Chief Joseph Rabban of the rights of *Anjuvannam* along with 72 proprietory rights which included the collection of tolls and other revenue and the perpetual right to the palanquin for himself and his successors. It is as recorded reads :

"In that year 4139th of Creation" 3479 of Tribulation and 379th of Christ, Cherumproomal Eravy Virma granted to the Jews the honour and privileges they were to exercise and which was engraved on Copper Plates called Chempeda in Malayalam and thereby appointed Joseph Rabban at the head of the Jews and called him Srianandan Mopla, and that the same Rajah divided his country into eight divisions which (he) bestowed as will be seen in the following translate of the Copper Plate".

'To that God who of his almighty will and pleasure created this world; and I, king Eravy Virma lift up my hand in adoration and bestow this grant as from time immemorial our sovereignty existed on the day of the 36th year of our reign at Cranganore, and thus I do hereby ordain and give all manner of power to Joseph Rabban to wear of five different colours to be saluted by firing of guns, to ride on elephants and horses, the call on the roads to make converts of nations, to use of lamp of the day, to walk on carpets, cloths spread on the ground to adorn houses to use of Palankeens, High Parasols, Kettle-drums, trumpets and small drums, and of all these privileges. I grant unto him and seventy-two of their houses free of ground rent and duty scales and appoint him as the head of all the subjects and churches in whatever part of country thay may be established and all the above cited privileges are hereby and without any of the least differences or contradiction fully granted by the Copper Plates unto the said five coloured Mr. Joseph Rabban and his heirs, male and female bride and bridegroom, to hold and exercise as long as the sun shines on the face of the earth and his descendants shall exist and may God grant his blessings............".

With the conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey in 64 B. C. followed that by Titus in 10 A. D. and the bloody retribution inflicted by Hadrian on Judea in 136 A. D. caused the great

dispersion of the Jews and there is no inherent improbability in supposing that a number of them sought asylum from persecution in Malabar which country was familiar to them by centuries of commercial intercourse. There is an allusion in line one to Exodus in the famous Hebrew inscription at the Jewish Synagogue at North Parur which reads:

May He who dwells in rock, in bush
For His own Sake dwell in my room
May light herein on Jacob shine,
be clouded, black, in exile's gloom
O answer David, Jacob's son,—
From fair Castile, of noble seed
This sacred shrine is now built sure
May God soon our Redeemer speed.[165]

There is no doubt that the Jews settled down on the West Coast during the early centuries of the Christian era[166] and their numbers were added to by fresh arrivals during the succeeding centuries.[167] Cranganore (Muzuris) can claim the pride of having

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165. Translation by Dr. H. Locue.

166. There have been small communities of Jews settled on the western coast of India since the tenth or eleventh centuries of the present era (i. e. 1000) – some believe they came much earlier: conjectures range from from 1000 B. C to 70 A. D. when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and the Jews residing in Judea and Galilee were dispresed. The Bene Israel of India, p 1 Benjamin J. Israel, Orient Longman 1984.

167 G. M. Moraes (History of Christianity in India, pp. 25—45) maintains that there were Jews settled both in Malabar and in the Konkan region of Maharashtra before 50 or 55 A. D. Saint Bartholomew's first Mission was directed to evangelise the Jewish settlements in Cochin and Konkan. Moses Pereira De Paiva, a member of a Commission of four deputed by the Jews of Amsterdam to Cochin in 1685 to enquire and report on the Cochin Jews has recorded that seventy to eighty thousand Jews migrated to Malabar in the year 370 A. D. from Majorca (one of the Balene Islands off the coast of Spain in the Mediterranean) to which their forefathers had been carried away captive earlier. "They were said to have found favour in the eyes of King Cheraman Perumal and with paternal and lasting affection he gave to Joseph Rabban the city of Cranganore in perpetual possession with an area of 3 leagues".
De Paiva's informants further told him that in 499 A. D. another "great batch of people" arrival from where they could not say because all their records had

first given shelter to Jews. It was picturesquely described by a contemporary poet as "the thriving town of Muchiri where the beautiful ships of the Yavanas bringing gold come, splashing white foam in the waters of the Periyar which belongs to Kerala and return loading with pepper".

From the above facts, it has to be concluded that the Jews came first to Muzuris (Cranganore) and settled down there till the close of the 15th century A. D. The Jews in Cranganore secured prominence in the pepper export trade breaking the monopoly of the Arab (also termed Moorish) traders operating on the Malabar Coast. With the connivance of the Zamorin of Calicut the Moors attacked them in Cranganore in 1524 and unable to defend themselves many of them fled to Cochin. In 1565 the remaining Jews in Cranganore were again attacked by the Portuguese with the avowed object of ousting them from pepper trade. The Jews were despoiled and they fled en masse to Cochin. The original Jewish colony was thus disrupted and

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been lost in the sack of their synagogue and houses in the 16th century. These arrivals of 370 and 499 were presumably the ancestors of that section of the Cochin Jews that subsequently came to be called the White Jews, to distinguish them from the much more numerous section of the Cochin Jews that came to be called the Black Jews or "the Malabarees". These Malabarees, De Paiva's informants told him were descended from 25 slaves of learned and rich white Jews who freed them after teaching Judaism and from the slaves of other White Masters who joined the freed slaves on the deaths of their masters. De Paiva also recorded the name of the heads of some 20 families whose grandfathers or earlier forebears had come to Malabar at much later date than 370 and 499 from such varied places as Jerusalem, Safed, Aleppo, Damascus, Spain, Germany, Persia and Iraq. S. S. Koder in his notes to De Paiva's report states that the tradition of the Cochin Jews is that they came to Cranganore soon after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A. D. which is not inconsistent with the belief that they came via Majorca after a halt of some 3 centuries there. Benjamin J. Israel rules, out this possibility on the ground that De Paiva's informants were eager to establish a Spanish origin for themselves in the 4th century when actually Jews moved out from Spain much later. (The Bene Israel of India, op. cit. p. 35). He is also of the view that the number of original settlers could not have been anywhere as large as 80,000 as mentioned by De Paiva, even assuming that many of them lost their lives in the troubles of the sixteenth century which compelled them to abandon Cranganore and move to Cochin town in stages. Even after a settled and prosperous period of almost four centuries the population amounted to not more than 2500.

the Jews finally scattered themselves in Mattancherri, Ernakulam, Chennamangalam, Mala and Parur.[168] The Rabbi Nissim a Hebrew Poet and traveller of the fourteenth century in an exaggerated vein wrote:

I travelled from Spain
I had heard of the city of Shingly
I had longed to see an Israel King
Him I saw with my own eyes.

The remnants of Jewish ascendancy in this region can be found in certain names extant in this area even now. A small hill known as "Judakunnu", (Juda means Jews: Kunnu, Hill) a tank known as "Judakkulam" (kulam means tank or pond) near Cranganore, a street as Juda street at Ernakulam, and a town known as Juda town at Cochin are all evidences.

The Advent of Christianity

It was the Kerala Coast which served as the conduit for the entry and diffusion of Christianity in India. Its advent is invariably linked with the St: Thomas tradition, which is perhaps the sole source of evidence in the absence of any other historical proof. Christian theologists are firmly convinced that one of the apostles of Jesus, St: Thomas, landed at Maliankara near Kodungalloor (Cranganmur) in 52 A. D. founded seven churches,[169]

168. The Jews called their original settlement in India Cranganore as Shingly. By 1971, the number of the Jews in Kerala had fallen to 112 due to mass exodus to Israel As of today it is estimated that there are not more than 50 Jews in Kerala

169 In 1952 on the occasion of the centenary celebration of arrival of St: Thomas in India. Pope Pius XII sent the following message : "1900 years have passed since the Apostle (St: Thomas) came to India.........This Apostolic lineage.......... is the proud privilege of many among you who glory in the name of St: Thomas Christians and we are happy on this occasion to *acknowledge* and *bear witness* to it (Of Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1953, pp. 96—97) Ward and Conner in 'Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States', 1816 to 1820 pp 145—46 states thus:: "Agreeably to the loose tradition that still

and established the first Christian community and converted several Nambudiri Brahmin families notably the Kalli, Kaliankara, Sankarapuri, Madapoor, Vyzampilli, Muttedal, Kottakara, and Pakalomattom families. The seven churches St: Thomas founded were Maliankara in Kodungallur, Palayur near Chavakkad,[170] Kottaikkal (Kottakkavu) in Parur, Kokkamangalam or South Pallippuram, Kurakkanikkulam (Quilon) Niranam in Tiruvella and Chayel[171] (Nilakkal near Sabarimala). After his activity in Kerala, he journeyed across the southern peninsula to the Coromandal Coast and was martyred and buried in A. D. 68 at

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holds amongst the Nazarenes, Christianity owes its introduction into this part of the peninsula, to the Apostle Saint Thomas who entered Malayalam in 52 A. D. He established seven churches, ordained two persons of consideration from Nomboory families, and took other measures to promote the practice of the Divine doctrines he preached; returning towards the eastern coast from this successful mission, he underwent the last honours of Christianity. Martyrdom of the Apostle first relaxed, and then almost extinguished the zeal of his converts who rapidly sunk into their old superstitions; their numbers and hopes were after a lapse of nearly two centuries reduced to eight families. At this eventful period, A. D. 345, the Patriarchs of Antioch who exercised a nominal sway over this distant congregation, dispatched under the guidance of Konnai Thomay, a wealthy Merchant, a Bishop, some Clergymen, and four hundred and seventy two Christian families to its relief. They were viewed with kindness by the reigning prince Sharun Perumal, who established them at Kodungalloor, readily protected their belief, and conferred on them some valuable immunities and honorary privileges. So seasonable a succour raised the drooping spirits of the last remnants of the faithful. Thus patronized, they rapidly increased in power and number; Antioch supplied an uninterrupted succession of Bishops who governed in spiritual concerns, till the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498.

170. "The Church here has undergone several changes occupies the side where once stood a Hindu Temple" A. M. Mundadan: Traditions of the St: Thomas Christians, 1970, p. 64; —"The tradition amongst the Syrians is, that St: Thomas built seven churches in Malabar, viz., one at Pallur near Chowghat, still in existence; another at Cranganore now destroyed; a third at Cottakavil or Prur still standing as are also those at Cocomungalum or southern Pallipuram; at Quilon; and at Niranam; whilst the seventh at Shazaloo, near the famous Chewri Malla, has been destroyed by wild elephants."—Day: Land of Perumals, p. 212.

171 According to another version a small church (*Arappalli*) Chapel was also established at Tiruvancode, thus the total number of churches established by St: Thomas come to 7½—(Kerala Charithram (Malayalam) Vol. I, Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, p. 1065).

Mylapore near Madras. To reinforce this contention, the work known as *Acts of Thomas*, (Acta Thomae) one of the earliest written record is cited. However ecclesiastical authorities are divided as to the date of this work.

It would be interesting to summarise the contents of this work whose authorship is attributed to Bardesanesa, a Syrian and native of Edessa in Mesapotamia. The Syriac manuscript in its complete form is preserved in the British Museum at London. The Acts are divided into nine parts of which eight are called the Acts and the last The Consummation of Judas Thomas. The First Act narrates the sale of Thomas to the merchant Habban. The sale was stated to have been effected by none less than Jesus himself appearing in a vision. The second Act states the entry of Thomas into the realm of India and the salutation offered to Gondophares, the king of India. Acts three to six describe the certain miraculous events and conversions in and about the city of king Gondophares. The seventh Act mentions that while Thomas was preaching throughout India, he was called by the general of king Mazdai to heal the wife and daughter of the king. The latter's conversion to christianity infuriated the king and caused the imprisonment of St: Thomas.

This view is further reinforced by the observation of the dispassionate cosmopolitan historian Dr. Toynbee in the following words "By contrast with the Monophysites, the Nestorian Christians found life in the Roman Empire impossible........ they learnt to make themselves at home in other human environments at the ends of the earth. In one direction they made their way by sea along the west coast of India and established a sphere of their own at the extremity of the Indian peninsula where their descendants or converts (captured from Nestorianism for Monophysitism) survive, to this day as "Saint Thomas's Christians' in Kerala" (A Study of History, one volume Edition, Thames and Hudson, 1983, p. 121). He is of the view that the Saints' mission and death in India are probably legendary. In concluding his survey of 'Abortive Civilisations' Toynbee remarks "Monophysite Christianity survived only as a diaspora, except in the highland fastnesses of Abyssinia and Armenia. Nestorian

Christianity survived only in the highlands of Kurdistan and in the swamps and jungles of Kerala, at the south western extremity of India" (Ibid, p. 126).

The Eighth and Final Act is headed the consummation of Judas Thomas and describes the martyrdom of Thomas which occurred *outside the city* and *on the mountain* where, the soldiers of the kings speared him to death.

Numismatic and archaeological evidence is often cited to prove the rule of a king by the name of Gondophares, somewhere in the North West of India in and around present day Peshawar. Likewise it is contended that Mazdeo is a corruption of the name "Vasudeva" of the Kushana dynasty, a contemporary of Gondophares, who reigned between A. D. 51 and A. D. 74. Nineteenth century writers like Dr. W. Wright, W. R. Philipps, F. C. Burkitt, and Bishop Medlycott are the ardent advocates of the historical authenticity of St: Thomas' activity in India. A Kerala author, Dr. P. J. Thomas, cites the *Keralolpathi*, a Malayalam chronicle to testify Thoma's alleged conversion of the reigning Cheraman king Bana Perumal.

Jewish traditions in Cochin, also support the Christian legend, first by repeating the account of St: Thomas arrival and secondly by claiming the existence of a Jewish colony at Muziris in 1st Century A. D. though the date they usually give for their own arrival is A. D. 69, some seventeen years after the traditional date of St: Thomas' landing.

The prolonged persecution that early Christian missionaries underwent at the hands of the Roman emperors during the first three centuries and the frequent conflicts in Western Asia between the Roman Empire and the local powers possibly compounds the difficulty of historical records to shed light on the work of St: Thomas in India. Yet the works of Clement of Alexandria (circa 220 A. D.) Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (A. D. 265—340) mention the efforts of Pantaenus, a well known theologian at founding a colony of Christians in one of the ports of Kerala Coast. In his *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius states that when Pantaenus arrived in India, he found that he had

been preceded by Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles. Syrian Christian traditionalists staunchly believe that Mar (which in Syriac means the Lord) Thoma was misunderstood as "Bar Tolmai" and thus St: Thomas and St: Bartholomew are one and the same.

Even the version of Pantaenus has been open to doubt; in particular the veracity of his having ever reached India proper. Nevertheless his account certainly seems to establish the presence of Christians in Kerala before A. D. 200; and Sardar K. M. Panikkar has aptly expressed the view that it is difficult to deny the truth" of the recorded statements of Pantaenus about the flourishing christian community.[172] It is almost definite that Christian missionaries did made their way to Kerala by a Greek ship sailing from Alexandria to Muziris. Cranganore (Muziris) must therefore in any case have been the focal point at which christianity first made its impact on the Malabar Coast.

Thus even if these works be considered as one of doubtful validity from the point of view of historical authenticity, the hold of this tradition cannot be lightly discounted.

Theologists further argue that the first great "Ecumenical" or universal council held at Nicea (in Asia Minor) in 325 A . D. divided the bishoprics of the Church into five patriarchs of whom the Patriarch of Antioch (the ultimate head of that Church) was invested with the authority of managing the affairs of the Eastern Churches and was given jurisdiction over the Indian Churches.

Twenty years later this Church in India was reinforced by the first Syrian Immigration in A. D. 345 consisting of 400 Christians from seventy two families, belonging to seven tribes from Baghdad, Nineveh and Jerusalem under the merchant, Knayi Thomas (Thomas of Cana) of Baghdad. These immigrants came as refugees from the great persecution of Persian Christians which Sapor II began in 339. The ruler of Cranganur, Cheraman Perumal is said to have conferred privileges or grants upon

172 History of Kerala. Annamalai University, 1960, p.5.

Thomas Cana and the Christians. Copper Plates recording this settlement were found by the Portuguese in the 16th century but they were appropriated by the Francis Cans, who took them to Portugal, from where they were neither heard of nor seen. It is here that one can discern the genesis of the Christian community in Kerala. Later, the East Syrian, Trader Cosmas in his well known work *Cosmas Indicopleustes* written in 536 A. D., mentions the existence of an established Church in Malabar under a Bishop usually ordained in Persia.

Two further group of colonists from the Persian Gulf followed, one in the 8th century and the other led by two Bishops Mar Sabrisho and Mar Paruz in the early 9th century. This group settled at Quilon, and in 849 received a grant of privileges, including the right to build a Church, from the king of Venad; the grant was recorded on a series of five Copper Plates which are preserved in the Syrian Christian seminary at Kottayam.

These links with Persia and Mesapotamia shaped the liturgy and also the doctrines of the church in Kerala. Thomas of Canas' venture was blessed and perhaps even instigated by the Bishop of Selevcia, who had already assumed the title of Catholicos of the East. The See of Selevcia was originally subordinate to the Patriarch of Antioch, but it seceded in 410 and in 424 the Catholicos assumed the higher title of the Patriarch of the East: later he was known as Patriarch of Babylon. In 431 when the council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius and his heretical teachings on the dual nature of Christ, the Patriarchate of the East refused to accept its finding and shortly afterwards delcared its adherence to Nestorianism. This break with the churches of the West has remained a part of the tradition of Syrian christianity in India.

The first Catholic priest known to have reached Kerala was John of Monte Corvino, whose visit took place in 1294, within a short time of that of Marco Polo. He stayed on the Malabar Coast for several months, on his way to China, and baptized a number of people into the Catholic faith. No doubt his converts lapsed, for it was only a generation later that the first serious

attempt was made to infiltrate the preserves of the Nestorians. In 1324 the Dominican, Father Jordanus, made his way by the trade routes to India. He arrived first at one of the ports of Gujarat, and reported finding a Christian church as far north as Surat. However, it did not take him long to reach the Malabar Coast, and to select this as the most promising field for proselytization in the whole of India. Father Jordanus returned to Rome, and there, in 1329, Pope John XXII constituted Quilon the first Roman Catholic episcopal See in India, and consecrated Father Jordanus as the first bishop. The Pope regarded the Syrian Christians as erring sons of his own Church, and provided Jordanus with a Bull calling on them to abandon their 'schisms'. This was the first recorded claim of the Pope of Rome to jurisdiction over the Syrian Church in Kerala. Its immediate results were not impressive. Father Jordanus returned and established himself at Quilon in 1330. The native Christians were friendly, and Jordanus founded the church of the Latin rite and gathered together a small congregation. The opposition he encountered came, not from the Malayalis, but from the Arab traders, who left the Syrian Christians in peace, but molested those who accepted the Latin rite, and killed some of them. Neverthless, the single church Jordanus founded was still in a flourishing condition when the Florentine Friar, John of Marignolli, arrived there in 1338. Friar John stayed in Quilon for a year, preaching regularly and decorating the church with mural paintings. But the paintings and the church and the very memory of its site have all vanished from Quilon. This earliest Roman Catholic communion appears in fact to have died out shortly after John of Maringolli's departure. When Roman Catholicism returned to the Malabar Coast more than a century and a half later it was supported by the military power and the religious fanaticism of the Portuguese. And it plunged the native Church into a series of encounters with fellow Christians, first Portuguese and then English, which created far more trouble and bitterness for them than any of their relations with non-Christian Indians upto the time, in 1502, when they naively placed themselves under the equivocal protection of Vasco da Gama. Thus when St. Francis Xavier arrived in Goa in 1542 to carry out his missionary activity, he was astounded by the sight of the devotees of the Apostle St. Thomas.

APPENDIX — I

Pre-historic Archaeology

It is in the late stone age, that we see for the first time elements which have gone into the composition of modern South Indian Culture. In most sites the appearance of the small tools called microliths herald a rather abrupt cultural change and may indicate intensive influences. Microliths might have been used from the fifth millennium B. C. if not considerably earlier and they continued in use after the invention of pottery and even in the Iron age. Evidence of habitation along the humid West Coast at Kozhikode, Goa and Bombay is available. Alongside there was a flourishing microlithic craft on sand dunes, locally known as *Teri*, which had become fixed with tools embedded in them. The artifacts include short blades, baked blades, a few discoids, lunates and other geometric stones which were hafted and used as knives or gonges, transverse arrowheads and almond shaped bifacial points. Their makers knew how to pressure flake stone tools and also had the bow and arrow. These sites perhaps date from 4000 B. C. if not earlier. Similar tools are found in Sri Lanka.

Only recently has Indian archaeology moved from the study of the typology of these tools to understanding the total ecological and cultural picture. Possessing the bow and arrow and probably the domesticated dog, these people were efficient hunters. Fishing was also important in the case of such habitation sites as the *teri* in Kozhikode. In that stone age people could cross bodies of water, no doubt by using coracles and rafts such as are still to be seen in the remote parts of South India. Almost certainly fish nets, baskets and mats would have been fashioned.

Drawings on cave walls depict scenes of hunting peoples and suggest that there were dance rituals associated with hunting. It is likely that several aspects of early cultures which became elaborate and formalized in historic times, all have their roots in the advanced hunting cultures of the late stone age. Valuable ethnographic records produced in past decades of the small South Indian hunting groups such as the Kadar and Chenchus provide further insight into the social

systems and ethics that might have prevailed over South India prior to 2000 B. C.

A cumulative evidence suggests that in the second half of the second millennium B. C. the settled Neolithic way of life had diffused to most areas in South India except Kerala, where forests were too thick to be controlled with Neolithic tools.

The Iron Age in Peninsular India, as in the north, is now known to have begun somewhat earlier than was formerly believed. In general it spread widely by the middle of the millennium. People lived in circular houses, had gold ornaments and bangles and beads of glass and constructed megalithic funerary monuments. Pottery consisted of ordinary red and brown wares, the black and red ware, and in the later levels Russet-coated painted ware. This culture merges into the Sangam period; the introduction of iron weapons and the horse seems to have been a key factor in its diffusion.

Most archaeological attention at Iron Age sites have been devoted to burials, which are often associated with megaliths in the form of large stone slabs placed in various formations as menhirs, dolmenoid cists or circle of stones, sometimes marked by stone cairns. In Kerala, there is a considerable range of distinctive but related monuments, such as large umbrella-shaped stone structures and burial chambers excavated in laterite. A wide variety of iron implements occur in these megalithic buried complexes, together with lamps, etched conch shells and the inevitable black and red ware. It is notable that there is a fair degree of uniformity in Iron Age burial goods throughout the South. A number of theories have been developed about Iron Age or megalithic burials. D. H. Gordon suggests that Iron Age cultural influences came to South India by sea. Maloney would suggest that the distinctive subterranean burial chambers dug out of laterite in Kerala might support the view that influences from the near East came by sea in the South Indian Iron Age, but the whole culture phase could hardly be attributed to that. Y. D. Sharma however places the Kerala burial monuments squarely in the South Indian megalithic tradition. G. N. Das thinks the megaliths of the Nilgiris were built by ancestors of

the Todas. K. R. Srinivasan finds several of the South Indian burial types referred to in Sangam literature. Furer Haimendorf has suggested that the builders of the South Indian megalithic monuments were of a different cultural tradition than those who produced the burial monuments of North Eastern India and those in the South must have been speakers of Dravidian languages. The whole subject has been reviewed by N. R. Banerjee in *The Megalithic Problem of India* and put in wider historical context in his *Iron Age in India*. For details refer *Archaeology in South India*: Accomplishments and prospects, Clarence Maloney.

APPENDIX — II

MEGALITHIC MONUMENTS OF KERALA

A. Pre-historic and Protohistoric Antiquities of Travancore

Robert Bruce Foote*

When examining the geology of the low country of the Travancore State, south of Trivandrum (in the very early eighties), by a fairly close series of traverses, I had not the good fortune to come across any traces of the habitation of that region by either the palaeolithic or the neolithic peoples, and my friend and colleague, the late Dr. William King, who worked over the northern half of the State, had the same experience. Enquiries made of the Trivandrum Museum through Lieutenant-Colonel Dawson, Commandant of the Nair Brigade, as to the possible existence of such remains in the collection, elicited a very courteous reply from which I give the following extract: "My headman gives the following information: 'I beg to state as no explorations have hitherto been made by this' Government in exhuming buried remains it has not been possible to work up this section.

"There are four urns placed on exhibition in the museum, of which the two wide-mouthed ones are from Courtallum and the remainder one with a narrow mouth bearing impressions of coir all round the outer surface is said to have been obtained from the north of Travancore and the other from Trivandrum. These pots are distributed throughout the length and breadth of Travancore and the neighbouring districts. They are found at varying depths from 2 to 4 feet underground".

Through the kindness of Lieutenant-Colonel Dawson I obtained an excellent photo of one of these urns which shows the texture of the surface extremely well. From this remarkable texture, one is necessarily led to the inference that it was produced by covering the damp earthenware before firing with a woven cloth, the pattern of which was impressed very evenly on the urn. Neither this pattern of surface nor this peculiar form of urn were met with by me in any other part of Southern or Western India; they appear to me therefore to be of very

great interest. There seems to be no indication as to what special purpose they were made for. The vessel in question may be described as a rather tall *chatty* with a small mouth.

Two reasons for the absence of traces of the peoples of the two early stones ages in Travancore may be reasonably suggested — firstly, the absence in the extreme south of the peninsula of the two kinds of rocks which those peoples chose as the material out of which to manufacture their implements and weapons, namely, quartzite in the case of the palaeolithic people, and varieties of basic trap in that of the neolithic people.

The second reason may well have been that man had not yet penetrated into the great and nearly impenetrable forest region which then occupied the Western Coast and the mountain region of the south.

As already mentioned the settlement of man on the heavily forested mountains was not possible till he had obtained the use of iron axes, wherewith to fell the huge trees he had to clear away, before he could accomplish agricultural work on a large scale.

The urn above described must be classed under the head of "fabric marked pottery", a capital definition in use by American ethnographers.

B. Malabar district

The only prehistorics from this district which form part of my collection are a fine celt and a couple of beads. For the former I am indebted to my friend and former colleague Mr. Philip Lake, M. A. (Cantab), for the latter to another friend Mr. Fred Fawcett, Deputy Inspector-General, Madras Police (retired).

The celt is a most interesting specimen, for it is made of a pale granulite and is the only specimen known in South India made of that material. It is of medium size, very shapely and

retains much of the polish originally bestowed upon it. Mr. Lake found it at the foot of the Kanyakod mountain when mapping the geology of the Palghat Gap.

I know of only one other celt having been found in Malabar, but the district has proved itself very rich in antique pottery as will be seen by the rich collection of it in the Madras Museum (vide my Catalogue of the Prehistoric Antiquities in the Madras Museum, pages 90 to 96). The specimens included were contributed by Mr. W. Logan, ICS., a former Collector of the district, and Mr. F. Fawcett.

Mr. Fawcett's beads* were procured in a cave at Mangalam Kap in the Wynad. The discovery of the cave as a prehistoric site was made by Mr. C. Mackenzie.

II A. MALABAR

Pre-historic and Historical Archaeology — Robert Sewell*

The pre-history in the region is *terra incognita* partly due to non-occurence and partly due to lack of a systematic survey by archaeologists. The only pre-historic relics from this region are from the *Foote's* collection — a fine celt from the foot of Kanyakod mountains and a couple of beads from a cave at Mangalam Kap in the Wynad. This district has, however proved very rich in antique pottery. Microliths are found at Calicut by Lt. Col. K. R. U. Todd.

The district abounds in rock-cut caves, dolmens, burial stone circles and menhirs, all of megalithic burial order. There appears to have existed trade between Malabar Coast and Phonecians and other ancient nations of West Asia. Large Roman coins have been found in Malabar.

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* A number of beads have unfortunately lost the numbers painted on them, the oil colour having scaled off during the hot weathers that have elapsed since they were marked. My memory would not serve me to restore all of them.

Foote, 1914.

*Pre-historic and Proto-historic Antiquities of India. Delhi, 1979.

1. **Chirakkal taluk**

There are about 16 pre-historic sites in this taluk which are traceable, distributed all over the area. *Rock-cut caves* are found at Chemkunnu, Eramata, Kalliyad, Kannapuram, Kuttiyathur, Kuttiyeri, Kuttur, Madayi, Malapattam, Taliparamba, Trichambaram, *dolmens and menhirs* are found at Kalivellur, Kavai and Vellur. A few *stone circles* are also known from Kayaralam.

2. **Kottayam taluk**

There are about 12 pre-historic sites in the taluk. *Rock-cut caves* are found from Dharmapattanam, Kadirur, Kallayi, Kannavam, Manattana, Mayilanjayam, Mithur, Panur, Peringulam, Puthur, Sivapuram and Tiruprangottur.

3. **Wynad taluk**

Only three pre-historic sites are known from this taluk. *Dolmen and menhirs* are known from Ganapativattam, Muppainad and Putaiti (Pudadi).

4. **Kurumbranad taluk**

Four pre-historic sites are known from this taluk. *Rock-cut caves* are found at Cheruvannur, Karayat and Kalariyur, *dolmens and menhirs* in the hamlets of Kayalat and Kirappariyur of the village Meppayur. In the vicinity at Pampirikunnu are found *two stone circles* with funeral urns of pottery. Iron age antiquities are found near Etahery amsom.

5. **Calicut taluk**

There are 8 pre-historic sites. Microliths were collected

by K. R. U. Todd at Calicut. *Rock-cut caves* are found at Annaseri, Chevayur, Kaniparamba, Kovvur, Putur and Valayanad, *menhirs and dolmens* at Annaseri, Iringalur, Kanniparamba, Koduvalli and Putur and one *Topikal* is found at Kanniparamba. Iron age antiquities are found near Etahery amsom.

6. Ernad taluk

There are 24 pre-historic sites. *Rock-cut caves* are found at Irunpuli, Karippur, Manjeri, Mannur, Nallur, Nilambur, Pananjanur, Puliyakod, Tirukulam, Urakanmelmuri, Vallikkunnu and Vengara. *Dolmens and menhirs* are found at Abindilam, Cherayi, Iruvatti, Irumpuli, Kannamangalam, Karakunnu, Karad, Karippur, Manjeri, Melmuri, Nallur, Nilambur, Ponmala, Puliyakod, Tirukkalangad, Tirukulam, Wandur and Vengara. Topikals are found in Karad, Koduvayur, Nilambur, Tirukulam. Stone circles are found near Charaye, Cherukavu, Karippur, Manjeri, Melmuri and Wandur.

7. Walluvanad taluk

There are as many as fifty pre-historic known sites in this taluk. One feature, specially to be noticed about them is that rock-cut caves are comparitively rare definite instances of which are found from only two places Panga (Paurgull) and Vattakum-puram, three caves at each place and in other places like Karimpuzha and Manjada have doubtful caves. The ones at Karimpuzha are supposed to be the remains of ancient mines and caves at Manjada appear to be subterranean passages said to run for a quarter of a mile underground. But this region abounds in dolmens and menhirs which are found at Alliparamba, Anamangad, Angadipuram, Arakkuparamba, Arakkurial, Chalavara, Chettahr, Changanad, Elampulasseri, Elettumattamba, Karakkot, Kariyavattam, Kattampabiguram, Kolapalli, Kodakurial, Kottapadam, Kottur, Kulathur, Kullatikod, Kulukkulur, Mundakottukurial, Mundamukna, Muttadattumadamba, Mattutala, Nattuvattam, Nenmini, Palappuram, Panamanna, Panga(Parurgull), Paral, Perintalmanna, Perur, Pulamantol, Pulasseri (Pattycheri), Sri Krishnapuram, Tachampara, Tachanatkara, Tenkara.

Tiruvalankunnu (Teeruralamkunna), Valappula, Valambur, Vattakamparam, Vellinali and Vettattur (Yedatur). Stone circles are found at Chumangad.

8. Ponnani taluk

24 pre-historic sites are known in this area. Rock-cut caves are found at Anakari, Annakara, Atavanda, Chavakkad (Chekkodu), Klari, Kodakal, Melmuri, Mullaseri, Olur, Tanalur and Tirunnavari (Tirunavayari). Dolmens and menhirs at Anantavur, Annakara, Atavanda, Kammanam, Kattipparutti, Klari, Kumaranallur, Mullaseri, Nagalaseri, Olur, Pallippuram, and Vadakkupuram. Stone circles are found at Alankod, Kammanam, Kappur, Kattipparutti, Klari, Kumaranellur, Melmuri, Olur, Parutur, Tavanur. *Topikallus* are found at Kattipparutti, Nagalasseri, Niramaruttur and Tiruprangod.

9. Palghat taluk

There are 32 known pre-historic sites. Curiously enough no rock-cut caves and topikals are known from this area. But very large groups of dolmens, menhirs and stone circles, at times running into hundreds are found at Agattaltara, Chittilanjeri, Chulanur, Edutara, Erumayur, Kannadi, Kannanurpattola, Kavaseri, Kavelpad, Kilakkumbram, Kodundirapulli, Kongad, Kundalur, Kunisseri, Kulahanna, Kutallur, Kutannur, Mangalam, Manjalur, Mannalur, Mattur, Mundur, Palassena, Pallatteri, Pallanur, Pananjatiri, Puduseri, Todukusseri, Tarur, Vadakkamseri, Vattakad and Vilayanur.

B. Cochin State

Urn burials with some menhirs are found on the alluvial sea board. At Cenkotta, urn burials were discovered which contained some black-glazed pottery (black-ware of the megalithic period). Near Valapad (Trichur) burial urns and carnelian beads were found. From the present site of the Museum at Trichur, some urn burials were discovered.

The rock-cut caves, menhirs and megaliths of the umbrella series (Topikals) are on the lateritic plains. At Kakkad, 16

miles E. N. E. of Trichur, at Tirukur, 6 miles S.W. of Trichur at Porkalam, at Eyyal, at Chovannur, at Kattankanpal and at Kandanasseri are found different kinds of rock-cut caves. Dolmens, both multiple (some within a single stone circle) and isolated are found at the eastern mountains region composed of granite gneiss and charnockite. At a place near Varandarapalli in the Palappilli Reserve Forest occur a number of dolmens bounded by stone circles. They are also found to be at Karikulam near Kunnattupadam within a rubber estate, at Pattikkad 8 miles E. E. W. E. Of Trichur, at Tiruvavamala at Munniarathandand at Koothandam. Dolmens, also with a port hole opening are found at Adirapalli falls of Chalakudi river, at Mukkathode and on both sides of the tram way to Parambikulam.

The port hole cists are found at Porkalam and the dolmens found on the slopes of Pattiattukunnu on the borders of Pazhayannur Reserve Forest.

The menhirs are discovered at Anaparakuttur, Choorakattukara, Muttan, Komalaparathala and Tiruppunithura.

Topikals are seen in a village near Vellarakal, Busti, 9 miles from Wadakkancheri, Ariyannur and Cheramanangad. Hood stones are found at Porkalam and Cheramanangad.

C. Travancore

No trace of paleolithics and neoliths due partly to the absence of raw material namely quartz and basic trap and also due to lack of exploratory work in the impenetrable forest and mountainous regions of the south.

Urn burials are distributed throughout the length and breadth of Travancore and neighbouring districts on the High Ranges and Cardamom Hills. They are particularly associated with the cult of the dead. In the hills of Travancore are found a number of burials of kistavan type, supposed to belong to the Malai Arayans. Numerous vaults called Pandukuzhis are also found in these hills. Menhirs are found in a number of places

in this region. But the most important monuments of the megalithic period are the dolmens. More interesting than the dolmens are the cairns.

The dolmens are found at Marayur and in the Anjanad valley on the flat rocky table land, in groups of three, four or five, around each of which is visible rough hewn stone circles. There are also dolmens round about Periakanal.

The urn burials excavated by the State Archaeological Department at Tengakkal near Vandiperiyar on the High Ranges, at Velimalai and near Devikulam. Periakanal road in the Bison valley are to be specially noted. At Thandimalai, again, some dolmens were excavated by Mr. Saunders. Some of these remains are displayed in the Trivandrum museum.

D. Excavation

(A) Valapai

The capstone-flush with ground (laterite) type of burials at Valapai was discovered in 1122 (1945 A. D.). These burials came to light while digging trenches for the building of a hospital. There were about 25 monuments forming a chain covering a space of about 600 ft. by 6 ft. Only four of these monuments were excavated, since the P. W. D. wanted to cut a road over the site for the purpose of the hospital. The digging was carried on in the months of July-August, 1947.

(B) Porkalam

The monument excavated at Porkalam was also of the capstone-flush type often met with in other parts of the country. But what was significant of it was that it lay among a group of other pre-historic burials within the sacred precincts of a famous Durga Temple and was of granite. The excavation was conducted, in February-March 1948, in collaboration with a small party sent by the Excavations Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India.

From the standpoint of scientific excavation the discoveries

made were unusually good. On the one hand, the big urn with such a shape and size, and intact, was never discovered before. Among the potteries, there were 13 types new to the State. They were all in good condition. The most novel finds of the excavations were a set of beads found with mud inside the jar, which are with painted surfaces and in many shapes.

The site itself-situated on the southern slope of the Porkalam Hill, two miles to the north of Kunnamkulam in the Talapilly taluk — of historic importance since it had figured as the battlefield in the never ending quarrels of the Zamorin of Calicut with the King of Cochin. Culturally also much importance is attached to the spot in so far as it was the birth place of Payyur Bhattathiri, one of the'eighteen and a half poets of Kerala". It is also said that many meetings of famous poets like Uddanda Sasthri and Kakkasseri Bhattathiri had taken place there. Hence the name — "Vedakad", meaning the forest of the Vedas. Moreover, the rather crude and worn out image of a seated Buddha, kept and worshipped over a heap of burial stones in a corner of the temple, speaks volumes on the antiquity of the place.

(C) Kottappuram

The Port-hole cist at Kottappuram was discovered while quarrying a granite slab. It was hollow, dug in the earth and fitted with granite slabs on all four sides with two compartments, one filled with earth and the other with granite. The finds are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum, Cochin.

E. Sporadic distribution of some megaliths discovered by individuals and institutions

1. "Description of the Pandoo Coolies in Malabar" in TLSB III (1823), pp.324—30.

Describes the Kodaikallus, Topikals and caves of Malabar. The few monuments excavated by Babington are described step by step. He says that when the loose soil is of considerable depth Chattis (urns) were the depository for bones while the caves were excavated where bare rock was encountered

Excavation of the Topikals revealed that they contained nothing. Beneath Kodaikallus, urns, bones, arrow-heads, iron implements, beads of different shapes, colours and materials were found. *Trisulam* or trident indicated Hindu origin. Some of the pots were painted, the designs being connected chevrons, parallel wavy lines and spiral motifs.

Babington gives the architectural details of the caves and states that their contents resembled those from the Kodaikallus.

2. "The cairns of Tinnevely" in *MJLS*, XXI, (1859), pp.27—30.

Urns were surrounded by a chamber of unhewn stones and they contained pulverised bones, several iron implements viz., spear-heads, axe with ring, etc., and small earthen vessels. The pots were similar to those found in Anamalai and Nilgiri monuments. The explorer is of the view that these cairns were Buddhistic or *Jaina* in origin. These monuments resembled the Irish ones though the absence of primitive weapons and the superior finish of the earthen ware would go against the comparison.

3. "Religions in *Malabar*, I (1887), pp. 179—83. Manual of Malabar.

Chronological sequence is given as follows :

(i) Megalithic remains Probably synchronous.
(ii) Excavated sites ..
(iii) Caves with massive urns *(kutakallu)* and massive sepulchral urns without caves.
(iv) Modern sepulchral urns of a small size.

Topikallu of doubtful sepulchral character evidently belongs to class (1).

The cave builders took advantages of the easy workability of laterite. Type (iii) monuments were the result of advancement in civilization and religious ideas. *Kutakallu* tombs concealed more advanced types of pots (decorated); beads too were found in them. A social gradation on the basis of shape and size of

burial urns and their contents has been postulated. Some urns had circular protuberance at the bottom and a hole drilled in it. Burial was symbolic return of the dead to the Mother Earth and that the protuberance would represent the *os uteri*.

4. "Rock-cut sepulchral chambers in Malabar" in *JAI, XXV* (1896), pp. 371-73.

A rock-cut cave accidentally discovered on the out-skirts of Calicut, was excavated. This cave differed from what Logan had described (see 3 above). Structural details and the presence of a granite door-slab and the absence of bounding circle have been mentioned. Contents inside were pottery and iron implements.

5. Government Museum Madras: Catalogue of the prehistoric antiquities (1901), pp.1—131.

In this are included Paleolithic, Neolithic and Iron Age antiquities collected by Breeks, the collectors of Tinnevelly (Tirunelveli), Madura (Madurai), Malabar and Coimbatore District; Branfill, Stoney, Cardew, Fawcett and Carter. The author has given an excellent analysis of Iron Age antiquities, especially of Breeks's collection from Nilgiris. Several plates illustrate the book.

6. "Rock-cut cave tombs of Feroke, South Malabar" in QJMS. XXIII (1923—24). pp. 299-314.

Describes the excavations of two rock-cut tombs at Feroke, South Malabar, including the surface indications and the finds therein viz., urn pottery and iron objects and skeletal remains. In one of the tombs an urn and a legged trough-like vessel, apparently a sarcophagus, was found. Graffiti marks are noticed on pottery. One of the vessels contained animal ash, greyish in colour. Besides citing the prevailing traditions regarding the caves, the author advances reasons to prove that the caves are megalithic in character.

7. "Urn burials in the Wyanad, Southern India" in Man.XXX (1930). Art.no.135.

The following urn-burial sites have been listed:

(i) Sultan's Battery site on the rounded top of a low hill overlooking the Calicut-Mysore main road, where, on the site itself the police station and the traveller's bungalow have been subsequently constructed.

(ii) Between the milestone 10/7 and 11/0 (approximately 18 km.) on the Kaniyambetta-Minangadi road are seen some urns both on the road and in the drain.

(iii) Between the milestone 12/0 and 11/7 on the Manontoddy-Vayatiri road, one mile (approx. 1.5 km.) north of Kaniyambetta travellers' bungalow and two miles (3 km.) south of the Panamaram river is a site covering an area of two acres (0.8 hectares).

(iv) Kandatham Vayil, eleven miles and two furlongs (18.1 km.) from Manantoddy on the road to Keroth, where some urns were found.

(v) Similarly some urns were found on the road from Calicut to Vayatiri below Puthupadi hotel two miles (3 km.) from the ghat and twenty-five miles and two furlongs (40.6 km.) from Calicut.

The general distribution of the sites, location, types of urns, pottery objects, beads etc., found therein is also given. A comparison of the urns and their contents with those from Tirunelveli is made in respect of the first mentioned site.

8. "Black polished pottery from urn burials in the Wyanaad" in *Man*, XXX (1930), Art. No. 138.

Chemical analysis and quantitative data for the glaze in the black polished pottery from Wyanad have been given. Black colouring clay has been applied to the pottery in the form of an alkaline slip acting as a flux in high temperatures. The fired vessels were subjected to polishing.

9. "The rock cut caves of Malabar" in *Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar Commemoration volume* (1936), pp. 384-89.

Caves scooped out of the lateritic soil at Panunda and Punnol (Chelleth cave) have been discussed. In the former a spear, a grind stone and iron objects were found. Excavation of the Chelleth cave yielded pottery. A four-legged, round and narrow bottomed vessel is worth mentioning. Some of the pottery were painted with decorative designs and goemetrical bands in monochrome. Pigment was black and painted after firing. Colour was some form of carbon unmixed with any colour. Five iron objects, one resembling a conventionalized human figure were obtained. The bowl containing bones was covered with a ring-knob, bed lid.

The author has also described at length the method of construction of these caves. The pillar in the centre was for the stability of the structure. He has agreed with Logan in that these caves were constructed by a people before the intrusive Vedic Brahminic culture. He has also recounted a local legend regarding these being used for residential purposes.

10. "Red painted pottery from Cochin State" in *Man* XXXVII (1937), Art. No. 179.

Among other things a few painted pots were also found inside a dolmen at Tiruvilvamala. The designs consisted of wavy lines, loop-coils, etc. The pigment used was usually white and must have been executed while the pots were wet over which a slip was applied before firing. A bronze bowl was also obtained from the grave.

11. "Porkalam 1948-Excavation of a Megalithic Urn burial" in *AI*, No. 8 (1952), pp.3-8.

A monument common to Tamilnad and Kerala was tackled at Porkalam which yielded etched carnelian beads, the designs on them being similar to some dated ones (first century A.D) found elsewhere. Two beads of Porkalam, exhibiting rough affinities with those from Bhir Mound (Taxila) would support this dating.

This would also agree with the terminal date for megaliths evidenced at Brahmagiri.

The report includes the description of the monument, pottery and other finds brought to light viz., pots of black, black-and-red and red wares placed both inside and outside the urn; iron implements; terracotta beads; etched carnelian beads; etc. Pottery was wheel-made and salt glazed. Of particular interest would be the four-legged jars.

12. The exacavation of an umbrella monument *(Kodaikkallu)* at Cheramangad brought to light a jar burial in which were found two small painted cups containing fragments of bone and bone dust.

13. "Rock-cut caves in Cochin" *IA*, No. 12 (1956), pp.93,115.

Method of construction of these found at Chevvannur, Kandanissery,Kakkad Porkalam,Eyyal and Kattakampal has been given. The caves have been classified into: (i) caves with central pillar, (ii) caves without pillar; (iii) caves with top opening; and (iv) multi-chambered caves. Vedic and Buddhist origin of these caves have been discounted in favour of megalithic origin. Typological evolution would be as under.

(i) Benched port-holed cists; (ii) caves with central pillar; (iii) caves without pillar; (iv) caves with top opening; and (ii) and (iii) further developed into multichambered caves.

14. "Rock-cut cave in District Kozhikode" in IA 1959-60,pp.69.

At Panniyannur amsom, Chembod desom of the district a rock-cut cave with two compartments was discovered.

15. "Megalithic site, District Cannanore" and "Rock-cut caves, District Cannanore and Kozhikode" in IA 1960-61, p.58.

At Cherunthazam an umbrella stone was noticed.
Rock-cut caves at Pattanur-Pazhassi, Koleri, Payam, Kannavaram, Kolavallur, Panniyannur, Kuttur, Eruvassi, Kanjirode and

Cherode were discovered. The last two sites are in District Kozhikode while the rest fall within the limits of District Cannanore.

16. "Exploration in District Quilon and Trivandrum" in IA 1961-62, pp.21.

Cairn-circles and cists at Kodumon and Poothamkara and urn-burials at Angadickal were found.

17. "Megaliths, District Kozhikode", "Megaliths Districts Quilon and Palghat and "Rock-cut caves, District Trichur" in *IA* 1961-62, pp.58-59.

Cists and cairn-circles were found at Edakkal and Nenmanni.

Cists and stone-circles were noticed at Poothamkara (Quilon) and Pallavoor (Palghat).

From the caves at Ponnani and Koonamoochi Black-and-red Ware and iron implements were obtained.

18. "Megalithic site, Kallar, District Kottayam" in IA 1961 - 62 p. 98.

Cists and menhirs were found in Pattom colony in Kallar, in blocks 106 and 500.

19 "Rock-cut caves, Triprangode, District Calicut" in *IA* 1962-63 p.68.

Rock cut caves at Triprangode in Muthuvancha desom in Taluk Quilandy were found from where were collected typical Black and red Ware vessels.

20. "Burial jars, Kumaramputhur, District, Palghat" in I.A. 1962-63, p.68.

Burial urns at Kumaramputhur were observed. The site has been disturbed very much due to extensive quarrying operations

21. "Rock-cut caves, District Calicut" in *IA* 1963-64, p.68.

Rock-cut caves, in Kumaramputhur were noticed; the contents of which seem to have been rifled.

22. "Rock-cut caves, Choondal, District Trichur" in *IA* 1963-64, p.67.

Rock-cut caves of the usual type with megalithic Black-and-red vessels were found at Choondal.

23. "Megalithic cists, Pandupura, District Trichur" in *IA*. 1963-64, p.67.

Cists on both sides of the teak plantation at Pandupura were noticed.

24. "Exploration in Districts Calicuts, Ernakulam, Trichur and Trivandrum" *IA* 1963-64, p.13.

Discovered urn-burials at Chengamanad. Numerous urns disturbed while digging pits for rubber plantations yielded iron implements like axes and swords. Bones were not found. Two caves at Chundel near Kunnamkulam were also noticed.

2. "Exploration in District Kottayam" in *IA* 1963-64, p.13.

Megalithic monuments of the following types at the places indicated against each type were discovered:

Menhirs of laterite:	Tirunakkara
Menhirs of granite:	Athirampuzha
Cairn circles:	Athirampuzha
Dolmens:	Kanakari and Kuruvilangad

26. "Rock-cut caves, District Calicut" in *IA*. 1964-65, p.73.

At Meyppayur, Quilandy, rock cut caves, rectangular on plan and with a central pillar, benches and side-openings were discovered. Contents included Black-and-red pottery. At Naga-

parambu, Nattuvattom Amsom, Tirur Taluk a different type with openings close together, suggesting a double entrance to a multi-chambered cave was found.

27. "Rock-cut cave Elambaulassery, Ottapalam", "Rock cut caves, Mangad village, Kunnamkulam, District Trichur" and "Burial jar, Sarvadhi Hill, Srekariam, District Trivandrum" in *IA* 1967-68, p.66.

A circular cave with top-opening and with two globular vases of Black-and-Red Ware for its contents was discovered at Elambalussery.

A circular cave with a branch on the estern side and a rock cut tripod on the western side entombing vases and bowls of Black-and-red Ware was noticed, at Mangad.

Some broken burial jars were noticed during quarrying operations at Sarvadhi Hill.

The finds from the first two places have been added to the collections of Trichur Museum.

28. "Exploration in District Trichur" in IA 1967-68, p.23.

Urn-burials at Nattika, Edakulattur, Eranallur and Kanjirode; menhirs at Venkitangu and Alur; umbrella stones *(kudaikals)* at Vellattanjur and rock-cut caves at Mullassery were discovered.

29. "Megalithic site, Kanimangalam, District Trichur" in *IA* 1967-68, pp.66.

An urn-burial site at Nedumpuzha in village Kanimangalam, was discovered, where from three pyriform jars were collected.

III. Megalithic Pottery and other Relics—Kerala State

The following are some of the important Megalithic monuments discovered in the State since 1966-67.

1. Nanambra village, Tirur taluk, Kozhikode district

Here there is a cave. The cave is of the Central pillar type with side benches. The potteries collected are jars, vases, and ring stands. The bowl of 1'¼" in height with a circumference of 2'9½" is of a special type. It is a globular profile with a pointed base and incurved featureless tapering rim. The jars and bowls are of the black and red variety treated with a slip both internally and externally and are salt glazed.

2. Thanakottur Desom, Badagara taluk

The cave is of the double chambered type with central pillars and benches. Four legged jars, vases, bowls, ring stands and iron implements have been recovered from the area. The pottery vessels are all of black and red variety and not polished or glazed. The four legged vases have a flaring featureless rim, concave neck, oblique shoulder and a tapering profile. The legs are hand-modelled.

3. Trichur taluk, Trichur district

The burial jars of the Pyriform dull red ware with an out-turned externally collared rim, convex shoulder and globular profile tapering to a truncated base are the monuments discovered at Punkunnam in Trichur. There is a double row of finger tip design on the shoulder. In technique and fabric they resemble similar pottery vessels discovered from megalithic sites. The pottery vessels overlying the lid of the pyriform jar, were not recovered as they had been destroyed. The jars measure .53 metres and .6 metres at the mouth and 3.5 and 3.20 metres at the bulge respectively. Their heights are 1.35 and 1.19 metres respectively. These are considered to be the largest jars so far discovered in Kerala. Some rusted iron implements and small

quantities of bony materials have also been recovered from them.

4. Peechi, Trichur district

The jars of the above kind were discovered from Peechi also. The furnishings over the lid of the jar were not found. Bowls vases, etc., were recovered from inside the jar. It is slightly smaller than those found at Trichur. In technique and fabric it resembles those of the earlier finds.

5. Rock cut cave, Badagara, Calicut district

A rock cut cave of the circular type was discovered in Vaikkilassery Desom in Chorode Village. The relics collected are bowls and dishes of the usual black and red variety and rusted iron implements.

6. Pyriform jar, Feroke, Calicut district

A pyriform jar with the usual funerary furnishings was discovered in a hillock in Vydiarangadi, Ramanattukara, Feroke, Calicut district. The jar and furnishings have been broken to several pieces and only one vase of the black and red variety salt glazed was recovered.

7. Cist Chamber – Kavunngumprayar – Puramattom – Thiruvalla

A cist chamber with capstone and floor slabs was discovered. The slabs have been badly broken. A stone celt of the polished variety rusted and broken iron implements and potsherds of the black variety are the relics collected from the cist.

8. Pallathara – Pallippuram Village – Shertallai taluk

The ring wells were discovered here. The depth from the ground level to the lowest ring was about 1 mt. 80 cms. Similar ring wells have also been reported from Cranganore area. They

resemble in technique more or less with the ring stands discovered generally from rock cut cave and megalithic tombs.

9. Rock cut cave – Purameri Village, Badagara taluk

A circular cave with a central pillar had been discovered in the area. The length of the floor (north-south) is 2 metres 70 cms. and breadth (east-west) is 2 metres and 20 cms. The height is about 1 metre. Dishes, bowls and four legged jars of the black and red variety had been collected from the cave.

10. Rock cut cave – Muttathodi Village, Kasargode Taluk

It is a cave of the usual type found in Kerala. A large number of bowls, dishes, plates and rusted iron implements were discovered from the cave.

11. Rock cut cave – Ponmala Village – Ernad taluk

The cave is a double chambered one. The things discovered from here are the usual funerary deposits like bowls, dishes, plates of the ordinary black and red varieties.

12. Rock cut cave at Malappuram

A circular rock cut cave with a top opening closed by a granite slab was discovered in Kodungath desom of the Perinthalmanna taluk. The interior circumference of the cave is 12 metres with a height of 1 metre 9 cms. at the centre. Besides the usual funerary furnishings like dishes, bowls, vases of black and red varieties and iron implements, an interesting structure of over 25 centimetres height in laterite was also found here.

13. Rock cut cave at Thaliparamba

A circular cave with a rectangular opening of 60 cms. × 54 cms. at the western side had been found at Nadiyanga village of the Thaliparamba taluk. Its height is about 90 cms. It has no

central pillar, the funerary furnishings like vases, bowls etc. are found in this cave also.

14. Rock cut cave at Mananthody village, Kasargode taluk

Here there is a laterite circular cave with top opening and rectangular side opening. The usual deposits were discovered. The cave has a height of 142 cms. The entrance opening at the eastern side measures about 57 cms. by 66 cms. The open court in front of the entrance is about 130 cms. below the ground level.

15. Rock cut cave – Olavanna village, Calicut district

There are two rock cut caves of megalithic culture. Broken pieces of megalithic wares of black and red type have been recovered from here. Even the shape of the cave could not be designed due to the considerable disturbance caused to its structure.

16. Cannanore district

Several rock cut caves are seen scattered through out the district. Of these two rock cut caves found in Cherukunnu village and in Trikooth, east of Kannapuram railway station are having the top opening type with central pillar. Another peculiar rock out cave in the district is one in Elad desom, Peelikode village, Hosdurg taluk. This cave has also a top opening. the ingredients consist of funerary furnishings.

17. Palghat district

A few black and red potsherds and an earthern lampstand and an earthern vessel of black and red from Alanallur, Mannarghat, Palghat district are among the monuments discovered. Shield of copper with embossed figures of warriors, Hanuman, elephants, lion etc. Helmet of Copper with embossed figures Hanuman, warriors etc. Battle axe of iron with removable handles with embossed human figures, battle axe of iron with wooden handle, old chinese jars with embossed heads of the

laughing Buddha and engravings of dragons, 3 Nos. of Dutch swords 3 Nos. of malabar swords, 2 Nos. of Malabar shield of iron, Malabar shield of leather, 6 Nos. of iron bionets, 2 Nos. of iron dagger with iron handle, 2 Nos. of iron dagger with bronze handle, small sword with bronze handle, iron lances with wooden handle, wooden Nandikesa, are the other monuments. The top portion of a supporting pillar with flower decorations and red painted megalithic pot with yellow wavy lines from a cist at Kozhinjampara are among other ancient monuments discovered from the Palghat district.

18. Burial Jars : Kallarakunnu, Malappuram

Twenty-five burial jars of the megalithic period have been collected from a place called Kallarakunnu near Aykkarapady in the Malappuram District. Besides the jars some quantity of broken bone pieces have also been collected from the spot. The burial jars are in a state of good preservation.

19. Megalithic Cave, Valapattanam

A cave of the Megalithic period was discovered in 1980—81 at Valapattanam in Cannanore District.

20. Stone celt, Kathiroor

A stone celt of the Megalithic period was discovered in 1980—81 from Kathiroor in Calicut District.

21. Megalithic burial jars, Palappilli, Trichur

At Palappilli, when a part of the forest was being cleared, a group of Megalithic burial jars were discovered in 1980—81.

22. Urn burials, Sasthamangalam

The State Department of Archaeology unearthed an alignment of urn burial jars at a site near Sasthamangalam in Trivandrum in 1981—82. The digging has yielded 27 big and small urn burial jars.

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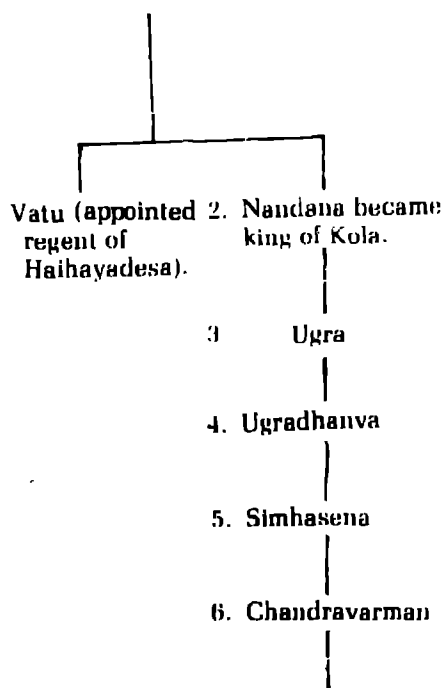
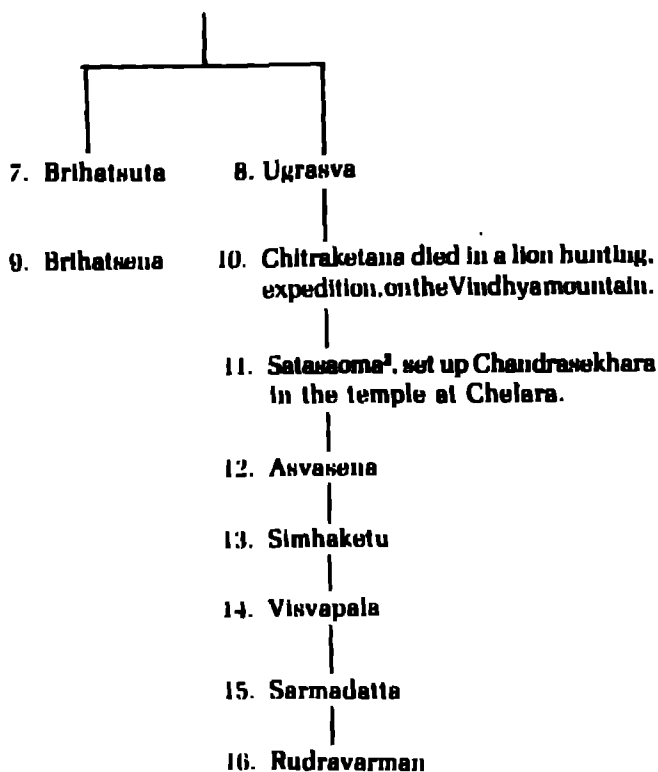
APPENDIX III

Legendary geneology of Mushika Kings

Following Nandana, a host of kings ruled over the Mushika country from time to time. The following legendary geneology is given by Atula in *Sarges* VII, VIII, IX and X of the Mushikavamsa Kavya.

1. Mushika Ramaghata: married Bhadrasena (Daughter of the Magadha king). his *mantrin* was Mahanavika (Vaisya) who was a native of Mahishmati. This king made *Kolam* his capital.

1. T. A. S. Vol. II, T. A. Gopinatha Rao, pp. 109–111.

Here are mentioned the following rather long list of names of kings who are said to have succeeded to the throne :— Vyaghrasena, Prithudyumna, Vajradhara, Palahaka, Bhimavarman, Brihatsena, Daksha, Atula, Nayavardhana, Mitrasoma, Bhadra, Viravarman, Amitakratu, Jagadasva, Suradyumna, Arjunavarman, Ugrabahu, Jayaditya, Vratasena: these nineteen kings obtained from Siva the boon of being able to live as long as they pleased. After having ruled the country duly, each one departed to the other world. Then came the kings Utpalaksha, Mahakirtti, Devadyumna, Brihaddyuti, Ugra II, Manu and Brihatgriva.

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2. N. V. Krishna Warrier suggests that the name should be satasoma—Opp. cited.

Brithatgriva

Vatukavarman, set up Vatukesvara[3] in Alasuddhi.

Ahiraha, built a Siva temple known as Ahiramesvara on the west bank of the river Pratana.

Ranabhadra[4]

Aryagupta.

Achala, built the city of Achalappattanam near the Mount Eli.

Asvasena **Vikramasena**

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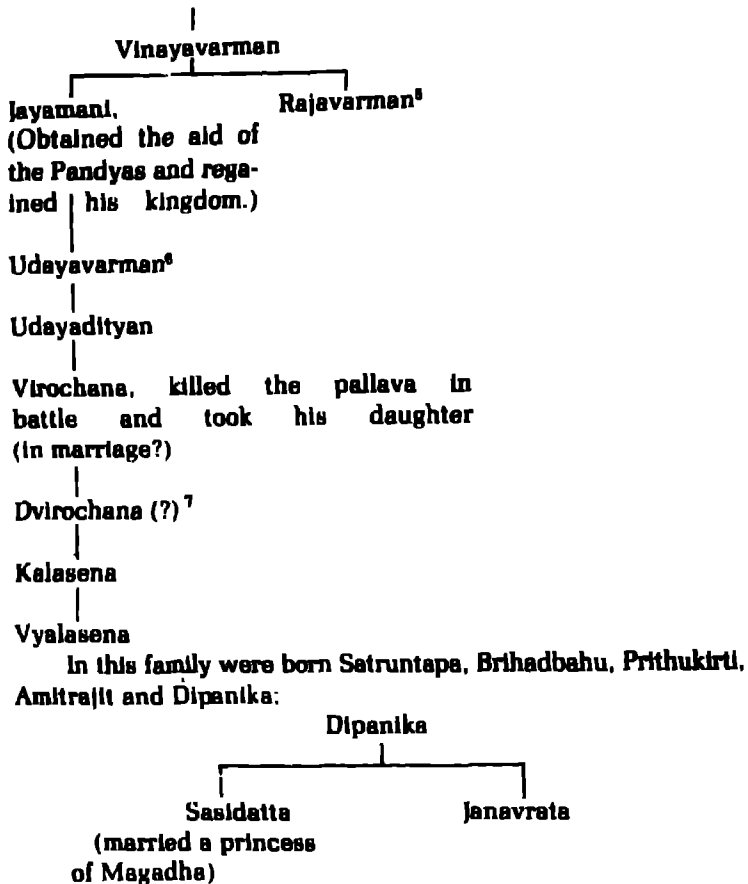
p. 539. This king built the famous temple of Siva at Celara (Cellur viz. Perumcellur) the fame of which is referred in many literary gems of old like *Chellurnathodayam Champu, Chellurisavilasom Chellurnathastavam* (Malayalam) and *Chellustrotra* (Sanskrit).

3. This king is said to have performed a number of sacrifices and stood in comparison with Raghu of the Suryavamsa. He is accredited with the establishment *of the temple known as* Vatukesvara dedicated to Siva at Alasduddhi. It is doubtful whether the term Alasuddhi stand for the name of the locality as maintained by some scholars. N. V. Krishna Warrier takes the name of Ranabhadra to be Mahirana.

4. This king was famous for his piety. He is described as engaging in the catching of elephants from the forest of the Sahya mountains and at last he had retired to a cave in the mountain.

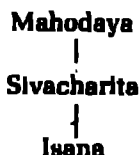
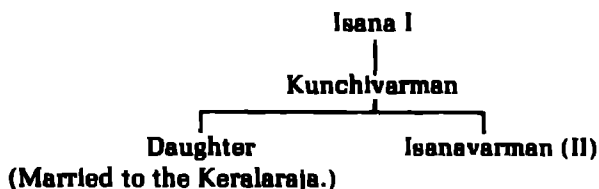
In this family were born Satruntapa, Brihadbahu, Prithukirti, Amitrajit and Dipanika:

These two quarrelled for the throne and killed each other.

After these the following princes ruled the kingdom, namely Vajrasena, Sura, Visala, Mahasvan, Ajila, Pushkala, Bahukirti, Suketu, Vikata, Sadhanva, Satyavrata, Chaturaketu, Svarbhanu,

5. This king is said to have established a Jaina (?) (Buddhist) monastery known as Rajavihara after his name. Warner (opp. cit.) suggests that the political set back might have prompted him to establish such a monastery.

6. This king is said to have fed 10000 Brahmins daily.

7 N.P. Unni read the name of Virochana II (opp. cit., p. 98)

Uttamakala, Sakala, Adriketu, Kamaprada, Nayadhana, Kavikarkasa, Parjanya, Nipatavarman, Turasvan, Sumati, Amitrabhavichanda(.) Akshobhya, Samarasaha and Mahodaya; the rest of the genealogy is as follows :

It is from Kunchivarman, the son of Isana the really historical portion of the geneology begins.

Thus the legendary account of the long line of the *Mushikas* starts from the founder-king Ramaghatamushika upto Esanavarman. In this account it is maintained that the *Mushikas* claimed their origin from the Hehaya in Central India. During the chequered history they had established contacts and alliances with both northern and southern kingdoms like Hehaya, Magadha, Pallava, Pandya and Chera. Some among these kings are credited with the founding of Hindu temples and Buddhistic (or Jaina) monasteries. The poet Atula has all praise for the religious tolerance of his patron's lineage.

Later kings

Kuchivarman is supposed to have held sway over a big territory. He is also considered to be a scholar. He had a daughter and a son called Isanavarman. The daughter was married to the Chera King and he passed on the country to his son even before his death. It is assumed that the Kerala King who married the princess was Raghupathi alias Jayaraja and

that a son was born to them by the name of Goda alias Keralaketu. The identity of this Kerala King has posed problems among the historians. He is identified with Cheramanar, Vijayarajadevar whose daughter Ravi Nili is seen making an endowment, to Adhipuriah Madhuraikkonda, Parakesarivarman Parantaka I about 936 A.D.[8]. Some historians identify Vijayaragadevar with Koyiladhikarikal Vijayaraganadevar whose name figures in the Kottayam plates issued in the 5th regnal year of Sthanu Ravi and assigned to 875 A.D. by T. A. Gopinatha Rao [9]. He has also been identified with the Vijayaragadevar whose queen Kilantikal made a gift to the Tirunandikara Siva Temple in South Travancore and assigned to since 900 A.D. [10]. It is assumed that Vijayaragadeva became king at about 890 A.D. and continued to be Perumpadappu Muppil till 911—912 A. D. The Mushika King was only a feudatory and his matrimonial alliance with the Cedi King without consulting him might have infuriated him to enter into conflict. [11] A new scholar on Kerala History identifies Jayaraja of the poem with Vijayaraja of the inscriptions in the following manner. Since Vikramararma is assigned to the date of 928 A. D. according to Narayan Kannur inscription, it may be inferred that Isana II (Mushika) and his brother-in-law Jayaraja of Kerala reigned in the last two or three decades of the ninth century. This agrees fully with the date of Vijayaraja as revealed by the inscriptions [12]. A more sensible interpretation of the identity of the two names Jayaraja and Vijayaraja is given by young research scholar on Kerala History [13]. According to him the name of Vijayaraja is mentioned in three inscriptions found respectively from Kottayam, Tiruvottiyur and Tirunandikara. From a critical and comparative study of the inscriptions it is to be inferred that there were more than one person having the name or cognomen of Vijayaraja.

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8. South Indian Inscriptions III, p. 236.
9. T. A. S. II, p. 80.
10. T. A. S. III, p. 144 and V. P. 113.
11. A Govinda Warrier, Studies in Mushikavamsa, p. 131—34. The writer is of the view that Cedis were the Kalacuri's or Kalacuryas or Tripura of Tewar near Jubbalpur and that they were the descendants of Hehayas.
12. M. G. S. Narayanan, Pratibhanam, p. 189.
13. K. Maheswaran Nair, Epigraphia Malabarica, Trivandrum, 1972, pp. 42—48.

He is of the view that the Vijayarajas mentioned in the three inscriptions are different personalities. The *Kavya* gives the Kerala King Raghupathi (also mentioned Raghuvira) the title of Vijayaraja as Keralesware. To quote him: "He may be identified either with Vijayaraja of the Kottayam plates or the namesake figuring in the Tirunandikara record, the similarity of the personal names is held to be a valid ground for the identity of the persons'. It is certain that Jayaraja was a king of Kerala. But it is not yet established whether any king being bearing the name Vijayaraja ever ascended the throne at Mahodayapuram. The identity of the king Vijayaraja still remains a riddle.

Isanavarman II alias Ramamani

Isanavarman II married Nandini, the daughter [14] of the Cedi king who was then living in disguise in the neighbourhood of the Mushika country. It is said that the Cedi king recaptured his lost territories with the help of Isanavarman II. It was this matrimonial alliance that infuriated the Jayaraja of Kerala, the brother-in-law of Isanavarman and led to an encounter between the two. At last peace was restored at the intervention of prince Goda, the son of Jayaraja of Kerala. Isana had no sons in his marriage with Nandini. He again married a daughter of a Chola king and a son by name Nraparama was born. Soon Nandini also gave birth to a son named Palaka. When Isanavarman passed away, there arose some skirmish with regard to the succession to the throne. The alliance of Isanavarman with the Cholas was hated by the Cedi partisans. But Palaka refused to raise a claim against his elder brother Nraparama who was efficient and powerful. However Nraparama did not live long. His son Candavarman was crowned as king while yet young. He also soon died. Palaka was persuaded by the ministers and local people to assume reigns of administration. He accepted the offer and became king. On his demise, Validhara, the son of his sister succeeded to the throne. This marked a transition in the line of inheritance from patrilineal to matriliny. This is explained by Atula, the author of the

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14. Govinda Warrier is of the view that Nandini was presumably a grand daughter of the Cedi King Kakkola I or one of his sons. Op. cited p. 127, Foot-note 40.

Mushikavamsa in the following way. Nandini, the Cedi princess and the senior queen of the Mushika king Isanavarman wanted her successors to rule the kingdom forever. She was pained to note that her co-wife, the princess of Chola giving birth to a son (Nraparama) and thereby taking away the country from her family. In order to gain the country for her offspring and to perpetuate the line of succession to her own family she did penance. By the blessing of the Goddess Durga she almost achieved her wishes. She wanted to have a son to succeed his father. She wanted much more and prayed to the Goddess that on every occasion the sovereignty shall pass on to the sons of the female members of her family [15]. Thus the interest of monogenesis was kept unimpaired by having nephews to succeed their uncles. The sons of the kings who marry from different regions had thus no place in this system. Atula wanted to give some kind of holy or divine sanction for the change-over of the system which was in fact purely a historical and political necessity. Here it is maintained that it was by the ordinance of the fate that the change had taken place. The blessing of the Goddess is only a convenient explanation in appreciating the situation from the point of view of a resourceful poet. During Validhara's rule, a foreign invasion took place supported by those who adhered to the patrilineal mode of succession. The Ganga forces eroded his territories "like the tumultous waters of the Ganges". But Validhara resisted successfully and held on to his possessions. On the death of Validhara, Ripurama, the nephew succeeded to the throne. Ripurama is pictured as an illustrious king comparable to Bharatha and Nahusha. On the death of Ripurama, his brother Vikramarama became king. The contention of T. A. Gopinatha Rao that Vikramarama was the son of Ripurama cannot sustain as we have already seen that matrilineal system of inheritance was adopted in the Mushika dynasty. Moreover the haplological omissions when two similar syllables are copied had not been noticed by Gopinatha Rao. Further Vikramarama was the only other nephew of Validhara who was thus second in succession to his uncle. Atula is highly eloquent about the valorous qualities of this king. There is a reference that Vikramarama did his best to protect the

15. Stanzas 12—63 to 12—69.

shrine of Jina (Sreemolavasa). This Buddhist shrine was about to be submerged by the mounting waves of the ocean and the king rushed to the seashore with a drawn sword as if to cut them to pieces. By constructing a sea-wall using big blocks of stones he was able to protect the monastery from the devouring waves [16]. A Vattezhuthu inscription discovered on a slab in the Narayana Kanur temple at the foot of the Ezhimalai mentions the name Vikramarama and Validhara-Vikramarama. This inscription is perhaps the first epigraphical evidence which would help a student of history to fix the date of Mushikavamsa. This inscription is dated in *Kali* year 4077 corresponding to 928—29 A.D. according to M. G. S. Narayanan. Maheswaran Nair is of the view that the inscription is dated *Kali* 4029 (929 A. D.). The former deciphered the word *Ilamkoyil* as crown prince while the latter observes that the reading is "absolutely absurd"[17] However there is no evidence to suppose that Vikramarama was *Ilamkoil* or Crown-prince at that time. This inscription also refers to the *Muzhikulathu Vyavastai (Kacham)* which laid down the rules and regulations for the conduct of temple affairs and administration of temple properties. This inscription is assigned to 9th century A. D. There is much controversy over the question as to which of the kings (Validhara or Vikramarama) mentioned in the Mushikavamsa is to be identified with these names. One view is that Validhara may be identified with the name-sake mentioned in the inscription.[18]. "The first name is mentioned as *Vikramodghata nama krtamatriratha ramah* (12—95) while the second is stated as 'Vikramopahita *ramapadaviracitahvaya* (14—18). Thus in both these instances the term Vikramarama stands for the name [19]. It is clear that the inscription refers to Vikramarama at one place without the surname and at another place with the surname. Hence the interpretation that "we may identify the crown-prince Validhara-vikramarama of the Narayankannur inscription with the Vikramarama of the poem, since the first part of his name

16. See Epigraphic Malabarica, op. cit. for details.
17. Epigraphia Malabarica, op. cit.
18. Epigraphia Malabarica, op. cit.
19. A History of Mushikavamsa, N. P. Unni, p.112.

"Validhara" is derived from the name of the uncle [20]", seems to *be more akin to truth. However even though Vikramarama may be assigned to Circa 928 A. D. there is no evidence* to *suppose that he was* crown-prince at that time. The possibility *is that both the names refer to one* and the same person, presumably because Validharavikramarama may be the full name with the expansion of the initial.

The successor of Vikramarama was Janamani. He is described as a pious ruler who had performed many sacrifices. Sankhavarman came to the throne after him. The researchers on Kerala History have cast a lot of phantomatic averments on the identity of this monarch. An inscription issued in the 58th regnal year of a Mushika King named Kandankarivarman discovered from a place near Ramantali in Malabar makes mention of a *Rajendrachola – samaiyersenapathi*. The inscription according to the majority opinion belongs to the 11th century. Most researchers identify Sankhavarman Srikanta the last mentioned king in the Mushikavamsa who was the patron monarch of the author of the poem. Govinda Warrier [21] in fixing 11th century A. D. as the date of Kandankarivarman observes: "If this Mushika King is to be assigned to the eleventh century as has been supposed, we would rather identify him with Sankha Varman (Skanda Varman – Kanda Varman) who was the fourth King of the Validhara, and in whose time there were some invasions. He would then have been a contemporary of the first three great Chola Emperors'. The transposition of the name Sankavarman to Skandavarman is not acceptable. Sankavarman is stated to be an outstanding warrior-king.

Sankavarman was followed by Jayamani whose glorious rule extended for a long time. The poet graphically describes that the capital was adorned with tall buildings and bazaars abounding in all kinds of commodities drawn from all over the world and highways often frequented by important royalties and citizens. The king was a devout Saivaite and the poet compares him to Lord Siva with unusual traits in double-entendre.

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20. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Colas, pp. 270—71

21. Bulletin of Rama Varma Research Institute VIII, p. 25, 1940, Trichur.

The next ruler was Valabha I. The poem contains a reference about the subjugation of a provincial chief who revolted against Valabha. Nothing certain is known about the chief's province called in the poem as Bhatasthali. Valabha removed the chief and placed the province under the control of Nrparama alias Ripurama, a young member of his family. It is to be inferred that during the time of Valabha, the kingdom was divided into provinces or Nada, each under a local Chieftain.

Kundavarman who succeeded Valabha was a benevolent and pious king. The construction of the famous temple of. Narayanapuram dedicated to Vishnu is attributed to this ruler.

The next ruler Palaka II, the nephew of Kundavarman died early enough after his accession to the throne. There was no lawful descendant and so Ripurama alias Nrparama, the provincial chief of Bhatasthali was consecrated as the new king. On the death of Ripurama, the natural heir Gambhira, was sworn in as king. This powerful monarch put down with iron hand the uprising of the chief of Marupura [22] who disobeyed his writs.

The younger brother of Gambhira Jayamani II who succeeded him was a great patron of learning and art. There is a section of scholars who opine that this king is Raman Jayamani Mushikendra of the 11th century referred to in the Tiruvallur inscription. It was during his time that the Cholas attacked Kerala. Jayamani sent his nephew Valabha II to assist the Kerala king. But before he could join the Kerala king's army, news reached him of the sudden expiry of his uncle Jayamani. One Vikramarama a member of the royal family tried to capture power by this time. Valabha besieged his enemy encamping at Viharadurga after having proclaimed himself as the king of the Mushikas by assuming the family title Ramaghatamushikesvara. Valabha had to put up a strong fight against Vikramarama who enjoyed considerable support from certain prominent citizens and ministers. However Valabha succeeded at last and he was enthroned as king with great pomp and splendour. He

22. N. V. Krishna Warrier reads Maripura. Also according to the chronology of Warrier, Gambhira is not included among the rulers.

took very keen interest in trade. It is said that at the confluence of the river *Kila* with the ocean, he founded a city called Marahi for the development of foreign trade. The bazaars of this city abounded in foreign goods. He also fortified the city called Valabhapattana. A temple dedicated to Arya (Siva) was constructed by him in the vicinity of the temple of Vatukeswara. It is laid down by our poet — historian that he held sway over many islands of the Arabian Sea. His varied accomplishments are referred to in many literary gems of old.

Srikanta referred to earlier as Rajadharma became king after the death of Valabha II. Atula is all praise for the glaring qualities of this king who probably might have been his patron. He was a great patron of men of letters. He was also highly religious. He renovated the temples at Vadukeswara, Kharakanana and Ahiraneswara. There is no consensus among scholars regarding the identity of this king. Ullur S. Parameswara Iyer tried to establish that Kandankari Varman alias Iramakudamuvar cited in the Eramam inscription is identical with Srikanta, the patron sovereign of Atula. He arrived at this conclusion on the striking similarity of the words Kandan and Kantha. His conclusion was on the basis of two facts:— A record of the 59th year of the Mushaka king named Kandan Kari Varman mentions a *Rajendra Cola — samaiya Senapati* discovered from Ramantali and assigned to 11th century A. D. Secondly Rajadhiraja I specifically claimed to have attacked the famous Iramakudamuvar (Ramaghatamushakas). Govinda Warrier objects to this identification on the basis of geneaology of the Kolathiris after Isanavarma. To quote him "The list shows that Jayamani II (No. 16), in the last year of whose reign the Cola invasion took place, was preceded on the throne by as many as ten kings of at least four generations after Validhara (No. 5), whose last date may roughly be put down to about 975 A. C. This means that, if we are to accept the views of Rao and Ayyar, we have to crowd together the reigns of these ten rulers between 975 A. C. and 1018 A. C., [23] the

23. He was anointed co-regent between 15th March and 3rd December 1018 A.C. (*EI.*, Vol. IV, p. 218).

earliest date of Rajadhiraja, i.e. within a space of but 43 years. Even if we start with Isana Varma (890—920 A. C.), we are not in a better position, as the interval of about 120 years would searcely suffice for 14 rulers of as many as seven or eight generations, including the two long reigns of Kunda Varman and Jayamani II. Hence, if we take the poet as giving us the correct genealogy after Isana Varma — and this may legitimately be presumed, as he was a contemporary of Srikantha, the successor of Valabha II [24] — we are unable to connect this Srikantha with Kandan Kari Varman of the Rajendra Cola record cited above. If this Musaka king is to be assigned to the eleventh century as has been supposed, we would rather identify him with Sankha Varman (Skanda Varman = Kania Varman) who was the fourth king after Validhara, and in whose time there were some invasions. He would then have been a contemporary of the first three great Cola Emperors.[25] Later researchers however strengthened the view propounded by Ulloor. It is observed "a careful perusal of the portion in which Srikantha is described (stanza 15.37) shows that the poet referred to him in one place by the term "kartrnamna" in which "karta" may be takèn as another form of "kari". This would help us to confirm the identification of Srikantha of the Kavya as Kandan Kari of

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24. Vide also the view of Mr. Rao (T. A. S. Vol. II, p. 111)

25. In that case, the poet's description of him would show that he was a successful warrior-king: vide *Musakavamsa, sarga* XII, verse 102 quoted *ante* and the first part of verse 103 "athavahati vibhavabhavamasminnrpamakutagravighattitamghripithah". Though this is in the usual vein of a poetical eulogy, it might not reasonably be taken to apply to a king who had to bow down before a foreign conqueror. Probably, it represents the Malayali version, while the story from the Tamilian standpoint is given in the *prasasti* of Rajadhiraja.

    The consensus of opinion is for placing these achievements of Rajadhiraja in the lifetime of his father Rajendra Cola who continued to reign till 1045 A.C. Though a few records of Rajadhiraja dated in his early years have been discovered (Cf. Nos. 201 of 1926, 241 of 1927, 124 and 125 of 1922), they make no mention of his exploits with regard to Kerala. The majority of his stone inscriptions are dated between his 24th and 36th years, and the achievements registered in them are all assignable to the period of Rajendra Cola (Cf. K.V.S. Ayyar, T.A.S., Vol. III, p. 121; JRAS., 1922, pp.162-3; K.A.N. Sastri, *Colas*, Vol. I, pp. 268—9.)

the inscription and to fix date of the work around A. D. 1020 [26]. A later writer agreeing to this suggestion adds as follows: "In the second line of the same verse Srikantha is styled "Bhartahvaya" meaning one who is called "Bharta". The word "Bharta" is the Sanskrit form of Tamil "Kantan" meaning husband, lord, leader etc. "Kartr" in the previous line stands for "Karta". Thus the two words kandan and kari of the inscription as "Bharta" and "Karta" in the Kavya. That the proper name of the person is "Kari" is suggested by the usage *Namna* in *kartrnama*. Because the person had the honorific "kandan" the poet uses the expression *Bhartahbaya*. Therefore it can be assumed that kandan kari of the Eramam inscription was the patron of Atula kavi[27]. A recent book on the History of Mushikavamsa questions the above two assertions.[28] To quote him: "The prosperous and renowned temple is known by the name of Vatukesvara, which is made up of the names of the builder Vatuka (an ancient king of the line who founded it) as well as of the presiding deity Isvara (Siva)". *Kartrnamna* stands for the name of the builder and *bhartahvaya* denotes the presiding deity. The builder of the temple according to the poem was Vatukavarman, the son of Brhadgriva. The poet in the above verse is only making a veiled reference to this fact. Thus the word Vatukesvara is made up of Vatuka + isvara, the first portion stands for the king who established it while the second part names the God Siva. This kind of ambiguous usages are met with in other places also in the kavya. Thus the derivations of the names of Ramaghatamusika, Rajavihara, Vikramarama, Narayanapuram Marupurapati and Vikramarama (who usurped the kingdom) are instances. It is interesting to note that the name Vikramarama is derived in two different ways.

Though Atulai geneology of Mushaka kings ends with Srikantha the author of the history of Mushikavamsa introduces a new king by name Nagaswami Udayavarman as the last in the line of Mushika king.[29]. He arrives at this conclusion on the

26. M.G.S. Narayanan Pratibhanam, p. 188

27. K. Maheswaran Nair, Epigraphia Malabarica, p. 48

28. N. P. Unni, opp. cit. p. 125.

29. Ibid, p.126

basis of the inscriptions Tiruvadur (Tiruvattur), Kannapuram and Eramam. The name of Nagaswami Udayavarman alias Ramakatamuvar is to be found on a stone slab in the Karuvakkavu temple at Kannapuram in Taliparamba Taluk. As this inscription is not dated the contention of the author is to be taken with a pinch of salt.

A galaxy of 118[30] kings adorn the pages of this historical Sanskrit classic of Atula. Though marked with a veneer of poetic exaggeration this epic in Sanskrit is the only historical source to construct the dynastic history of an outstanding royal house of Kerala of the hoary past.

30. Pertinent to remark that some scholars on Kerala History do not agree with this number. Gopinatha Rao (T. A. S. Vol.II, pp. 87, 105) Krishna Warrier (Vijnakairali, opp. cit) and Dr. K. Raghavan Pillai, (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series No. 246), omit the name of Gambhira from the Chronological list while the name of Ranabhara is given as Mahirana.

APPENDIX — IV

ORIGIN OF MALAYALAM

Malayalam like other Indian languages shows a general Indian personality or an Indian character. As is well-known the Indian people composed of diverse racial elements now speak languages belonging to 4 distinct speech families — the Aryan, the Dravidian, the Sino-Tibetan or Mongoloid and the Austric. True that these 4 types of speech exhibit fundamental differences in formation and vocabulary, in sounds and syntax. But in spite of the genetic diversity they have influenced each other profoundly — particularly the Aryan, the Dravidian and the Austric speeches. Dravidian is the second most important language family of India. It was Robert Caldwell who established the separate existence of a Dravidian speech — family in South India. It is basically Pre-Aryan "with important Aryan modification within as well as Aryan super-structure at the top"[1]. The Dravidian language family has almost entrenched itself in South India unlike the Aryan, the Austric and the Sino-Tibetan speeches. One particular characteristic of the Dravidian languages according to S. K. Chatterji[2] is that they belong to a class of speeches known as "agglutinative" i.e., the word is made up of a root which comes at the head or beginning and the root is followed

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1 Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. 5, page XIX — SK. Chatterjee. Philologists have traced significant affinities between all the South Indian languages and the Prakrit (Sanskrit was the appointed language of Indian literature and Prakrit, a corruption of Sanskrit was the spoken dialect) and Manu in Book X of his *Dharma Sastra* refers to the Dravidian group of languages as the Southern branch of the Aryan family.

2. The Dravidian languages fall into several groups. The North Western group is now represented only by the Brahui speech current in Baluchistan. The Northern group includes a great literary language, Telegu, and a number of other speeches which have never been cultivated properly, such as the various Goundi dialects, Kurukh or Oraon, Maler or Malaphanya, Kui or Kandh, Parji, Kolami and a few others. The Southern Dravidian group of languages includes Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam. These, together with Telegu, form four of the most advanced languages of India, with rich literatures. Further, we have within the Southern group a number of speeches like Tulu, Kota, Toda, and Kodagu or the Coorg speech.

by one or more terminations which were originally entire words, but have taken up the function of modifying suffixes. These Dravidian languages had been greatly influenced by Sanskrit and other Indo-Aryan languages. The Dravidian speech viewed from the point of view of antiquity is certainly older than Aryan. The specimen of Dravidian writing and literature are over a millennium later than the oldest Aryan documents. Of the group Tamil alone retains its Dravidian character most appreciably. The other three cultivated Dravidian speeches including Malayalam have almost surrendered themselves to Sanskrit.

The prime question to be taken note of with regard to the origin of Malayalam is that Kerala with its cisghatian isolation was till a few centuries ago comparatively free from outside influence. The inscriptional evidence relating to the Malayalam pin-points to the fact that the language began to show its individual characteristics from the 9th century A. D. This independent transformation having begun in the later and the earlier halves of the 9th and 10th century A. D. Malayalam found its solid base in the path of independent development. The emergence of Malayalam according to some authors goes back to the 13th century A. D. There is also a view that the language directly sprang up from a common Dravidian stock. However there is no agreement among the linguists whether this language is a derivation from Tamil or a common Dravidian stock. One fact is however quite certain. The content of Sanskrit words is by far greater in Malayalam than in any other Dravidian tongues. It is generally agreed that Malayalam began to be used as a written language from the 11th century onwards. In order to trace the evolution of Malayalam in order of time, we find that the ancient Sanskrit scholars called all the South Indian languages by a common name, Dravidi. The great Indian astronomer, Varahamihira who lived in the sixth century A. D. makes a difference between the Eastern and Western branches of the South Indian languages. The time of the beginnings of the separation of Malayalam and Tamil may therefore be attributed to the time of Varahamihara. Alberuni, the Musalman scholar at the court of Mohamed of Ghazni writing at the beginning of the 11th century says "Malabar which extends from Karoha to

Kulam is 300 parasangs long. The whole country produces the pan. There is much coined gold and silver here which is not exported to any place. They speak a mixed language like the men of Khabbalika in the direction of Rum whom they resemble in many respects". From this statement of Alberuni, who was a faithful chronicler of the men and manners of his times it is clear that the separation had not become complete by his time. Marcopolo who visited Malabar in 1280 A.D. remarked as follows: "The people of Melibar have a *language of their own and a king* of their own and pay tribute to nobody"*. And coming to more recent times we find Portuguese writers giving the name "Maleama" to the language. From this we can safely conclude that by this time, the language became absolutely and essentially distinct from Tamil.

The question before the enquirer is whether Malayalam is an independent branch of the Dravidian Group or only a recent derivative from its chief member Tamil. Dr. Herman Gundert held that it was an independent language of the Dravidian group. Kovunni Nedungadi in his *Kerala Kaumudi* (1875 A.D.) had stated that Malayalam had originated from Sanskrit. This view is not shared by most scholars. The tremendous influence of Sanskrit on the growth of Malayalam language and literature might have led Kovunni Nedungadi to arrive at such a conclusion. A great galaxy of writers in Sanskrit beginning with the great exponent of Advaita Vedanta, Sankaracharya and a host of ruling princes who composed verses and other works in Sanskrit might have led to the introduction of very many Sanskrit vocables into Malayalam. After Nedungadi the linguist like Robert Caldwell opined that Malayalam was an offshoot that emerged in the middle period of the development of Tamil[3]. Another very pertinent view is that

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* Colonel Yules Marcopolo, Vol. II, p. 312.

3. In the introduction to his Comparative Grammer of the Dravidian Languages (1875), Robert Caldwell writes: Malayalam being, as I conceive, an offshoot of Tamil differing from it chiefly at present by its disuse of the personal termination for the verbs and the larger amount of Sanskrit derivatives, it is felt that it might perhaps be regarded as a dialect of Tamil rather than a distinct member of the

Malayalam as its stands today is a different language and not a dialect of Tamil. Recent linguistic studies show that even in origin it could not have been a daughter of Tamil. According to some scholars Malayalam got separated from the Proto-Dravidian tongues long before Tamil separated from the same stock. Personal termination for the words is extensively found in Tamil i.e., the verb root takes on suffixes differing with person, gender and number. But malayalam has only the tense termination and no additional personal endings. It is a distinguishing feature of the Proto-Dravidian language that it had no such personal endings in its earlier phase. The probability is therefore that Malayalam began its differential evolution from the parent language before the latter had developed these features. Many words found in ancient Tamil works have continued to be in use over centuries in Malayalam, while modern Tamil do not use any of them. Words in the old phonetic forms are found in Malayalam whereas in Tamil they are used with phonetic variations. However it is certain that Tamil and Malayalam are very close to each other and are mutually intelligible to a certain extent. This bond of union resembles as jigsaw puzzle with many a missing link. The language having originated in very old Tamil came under the influence of Sanskrit and in the peculiar historical circumstances underwent many changes and emerged as a different language. With its emergence as a distinct language Malayalam discarded old *Vattezhuthu* script and evolved a new script based on *Grandha* used for writing Sanskrit in South India.

The different theories on the origin of Malayalam by different scholars may be summarised as follows: According to Bishop Caldwell, Malayalam is an offshoot of Tamil. The considered judgement of A.R. Raja Raja Varma is that Malayalam originated from *Kotum* Tamil even though he did not postulate an admixture of two languages to a third. The learned author L.V. Ramaswamy

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Dravidian family. But, after a survey of the their difference, he had to modify his statement thus: "The difference between Malayalam and Tamil, though originally slight, has progressively increased so that the claim of Malayalam as it now stands to be considered not as a mere dialect of Tamil but as a sister-language cannot be called in question. Originally, it is true, I considered it to have been not a sister but a daughter. It may be described as a much altered offshoot."

Iyer delineates that Malayalam evolved from early middle Tamil. The author of the History of the Sanskrit literature in Malayalam, Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma attributed it as an Apabhramsa *Basha* (Vulgarised Prakrit) of Sanskrit. Of late Professor Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai and Professor C.L. Antony have made some studies which throw new light on the origin of Malayalam. Professor Elamkulam had centred his studies around the language of the inscriptions and *Basha Kaudileeyam* (mixed for complex) and arrived at the conclusion that Malayalam is of *Misrabhasha* origin. According to him Malayalam was resultant of the admixture of two languages, that is Sanskrit and Cen Tamil, the latter spoken throughout Kerala at the time of the advent of the Nampoothiris. He holds the view that the different stages in the natural and continuous evolution begins with the language in the inscriptions and that *Ramacharitham, Bhasha Kandileeyam* and other texts representing respective stages of development. He is of the view that the Nampoothiris or rather *Thrivarnikas* first attempted to write the language and that they were the real master minds behind the evolution of Malayalam language. Professor C.L. Antony maintained Malayalam was a separate dialect from Tamil and it asserted and evolved as a language by infiltrating into *Cen* Tamil and Sanskrit languages by the dawn of the 16th century. It threw away the patronage and supermacy of the super-imposed language and gradually emerged as a separate language. The *sine qua non* of their studies are based on the behaviour of the native linguistic elements and foreign ones separately to decide whether the evidence furnished by the oldest copper plates and stone inscriptions show any resemblance to modern Malayalam. On a close examination, we find that the language in the above copper plates and stone inscriptions is closely akin to the ancient classical Tamil known as *Sen Tamil* even though some words and forms which are peculiar to Malayalam occur in them. However the general style of the language in which they are written is Tamil. The Syrian Christian inscriptions of the 8th and 9th centuries cannot be read without an adequate knowledge of *Sen Tamil*. In the language of *Ramacharitham* which is believed to be the earliest Malayalam composition exhibits very few differences between Malayalam and Tamil. This is corroborative of the language in the inscriptions and

copper plates. Also the diction, style and metre of *Ramakathappattu* of Ayyappilla Asan, *Ramayana* of Kannassa Panikkar, *Payyannur Pattola* (and judged from internal evidence to belong to the beginning of the Kollam Era) and the *Yatrakali* songs of the Nampoothiris are essentially Tamil. The earliest documents in Vatteluthu or the Chera Pandya character in which Malayalam was once written really, show the predominant sway of Tamil language. . Till the dawn of the 20th century, the Malayalam numerals used to be the same as those of the Tamil. All these facts go to warrant the conclusion that the history of Malayalam is but that of a local dialect assuming an independent character only after the decline of the Tamil influence in Kerala. Also the very fact that a Malayali and a Tamilian are able to make themselves understood without appreciable difficulty is another factor pointing to the origin of the language. As Dr. S. K. Chatterji observed Malayalam more than any other language of India, Aryan or Dravidian, came under the spell of Sanskrit and it occupies its honoured place in the hall of the great languages of India.

APPENDIX - V

SAKTHIBHADRA, THE GREAT DRAMATIST FROM KERALA

Sakthibhadra was the first among the Sanskrit scholars from south India im the 9th century A.D. to compose an admirably full-blown drama. The drama which this richly gifted poet wrote is *Ascharyachoodamani*. It is considered by scholars as sacred, profane, classical, romantic, historical and imaginative. It depicts phases running from the divine to the mundane, from the transcendental to the empirical view of life. The masterly craftsmanship of Sakthibhadra puzzled many scholars of Northern India who till then used to ridicule the southerners as incapable of producing a genuine dramatic composition *(Nataka) bearing* their own imprint and intrinsic worth. The prologue of Sakthibhadra's drama is quite indicative of this fact. For in the *Sthapana, the nati* says to *Sutradhara* that the Northerners considered such an event as strange as "the blossoming of the skies and extraction of oil from earth". The prologue is therefore quite enough evidence that *Ascharyachoodamani* was the first among the original Sanskrit dramas of South India and that it had been a favourable pursuit of some northern scholars to deride the South Indian Scholars and to accuse them of the gift to make original compositions.

Ascharyachoodamani, in the words of Professor Kuppuswami Sastri who discovered it, is "the best of the Rama plays, perhaps barring Bhavabhuthi's *Uttararamacharitha* in certain respects[2]". Winternitz goes further and remarks that in dramatic action and, stageworthiness, Sakthibhadra's drama surpasses even *Uttararamacharitha*. Barnet is of the view that this drama deserves to be included in the list of classics and studied as such[3]. This jewel casket in the realm of Sanskrit drama has

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1. *Nati—Arya! Athyahitam Vilavethan, Akasam prasuthaepushpam Cikata Tailamulpadayanthi. Yadi dhakshnasya disa agatham natakanibhadhanum.*

2. Balamanorama Series No. 9, Mylapore, 1926, p. 19.

3. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, p. 353.

been a perennial source of inspiration to many dramatists in the various Indian literatures.

The drama takes its name from the miraculous crest jewel given to Rama and Sita by the hermits. Sakthibhadra shows real judgement where he deviates from Valmiki in the construction, of the plot as in the way "in which Sita's abduction is made least objectionable by Ravana approaching her under Rama's disguise and misleading her by a false announcement of Bharatha's kingdom being in danger[4]". Some scholars believe that the *Adbhuthrasa* which is the dominating motiff of the play is to be taken as the ground for the adoption of the title *Ascharya-choodamani*. However, according to the *Natankusa*[5] the main sentiment of this play is given as *Vira*.

Sakthibhadra's date

According to the learned author of the *Kerala Sahitya Charithram*, the only Sanskrit works of South Indian scholars before Sakthibhadra were *Bhagavatijukeeyam* by Bodhayana and *Mathavilasom* by Mahendra Vikrama Pallava. As the *Mamandoor* inscription clearly testifies to the fact that Mahendra Vikrama Pallava lived in the 7th century of the Christian Era, the author states that Sakthibhadra also lived in the 7th century A.D.[6]. But at the same time the distinguished author records that Sakthibhadra was a contemporary of Sankaracharya. The crux of the problem in assigning Sakthibhadra and Sankara to the 7th century A.D. arose from the Mahakavi's personal view regarding Sankara's age. According to him Sankara lived between A.D. 655 and 687. It has been established on literary and inscriptional evidence that Sankara lived between

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4. Balamanorama Series No. 9, with an introduction by S. Kuppuswami Sastri, p. 12, Mylapore, 1926

5. Ibid., p.7. Ascharyabhutha Chudamani Yasmin prathipadyathaena Amgiknthaythi va chudamani prabhnthi natakantham vira rasa prathamathat.

6. Kerala Sahitya Charithram Vol I Mahakavi Ulloor S Parameswara Iyer, p 97

805-837 A.D[7]. Since the contemporaneity of Sankara and Sakthibhadra is once established, the latter could not but be assigned to the ninth century A.D. In discussing the problem of the relative "priority" of Sakthibhadra and the royal dramatist Kulasekhara Varman, Dr. Kunjunni Raja establishes that Kulasekhara must have flourished later than Sakthibhadra since Kulasekharas date is fixed at about 900 A.D.[8] Sakthibhadra must be assigned to about the ninth century A.D. The contention of Dr. Raja is untenable in that if Sakthibhadra lived during the time of or later than Kulasekhara he could not have omitted to mention the name of this royal dramatist who revolutionised the dramatic world by his monumental works like Subhadrarjuna and Taptathisamvaranam. The gifted pen of Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai has established beyond doubt that the author of *Mukundamala*, *Taptisamvaranam*, and other works was Ramavarma (885—917 A.D.) of the Kulasekhara dynasty who ruled with their capital at Mahodayapuram. Prof. Elamkulam asserts that from what Sankaranarayanan has given in his interpretation of *Lakhubhaskariyees* that Kulasekhara, the author of *Mukundamala* and other works lived between 885-917 A.D.[9] Winternitz suggested that some influence of Bhattanarayana's works could be detected in Sakthibhadra's composition[10]. He cited the passage "*Uttamsayishyathi Kachamthsava devi bhima*" in Bhattanarayana's *Venisamhara*, which bears the imprint of *Veneem karenae tava mokshyathi devi deva* in *Ascharyachooda-*

7. See A History of India, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Vol. I, page 274; Cultural Heritage of India Vol. II, p. 98; Indian Historical Quarterly III. T. K. Krishna Menon, p. 220. According to Mahakavi Kodungalloor Kunjikuttan Tampuran and P. Govinda Pillai, the author of first history of Malayalam Literature, Sankara lived between 655—687 A. D. Tampuran calculates the date of birth of Sankara on the basis of *Kali* 3889.

8. Chila Kerala Charithra Prasnangal, p. 35—55.

9. The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature, p. 16.

10. Quoted by Dr. Kunjan Raja from Kuppuswami Sastri commemoration Volume, also Opert. List of MSS in private Libraries of India, p. 4. Dr. Raja rejects the contention of Prof: Rama Pisharodi that as there is no reference about Sakthibhadra in Tapatisamvarana, Kulasekhara might have lived before him.

mani. But it has been now established that Bhattanarayana lived in the second half of the 7th century A.D. This also proves that Sakthibhadra lived in the ninth century.

Sakthibhadra may thus be safely assigned to the ninth century A.D. There is also a very popular tradition in Kerala that he was a contemporary of Shri Sankara, the great *Advaitha* philosopher. It is said that Sakthibhadra met Sankara at Changanoor during the latter's *digvijaya* and read out his drama to him with a view to get his blessing and approval. Sankara did not make any comment either for or against it. Sakthibhadra thereupon destroyed his drama in the fire. Sankara was having his vow of silence at that time. Sakthibhadra mistook this as Sankara's disapprobation and that led to the destruction of the work in the fire. Later when Sankara returned to Chengannoor after his *digvijaya*, he sent for Sakthibhadra and enquired about his drama, by eulogising it as *Bhuvana-buthi*. This was reminiscent of the masterly way in which the word *'bhuvana bhutiya'* was used in a verse in the drama[11]. Sakthibhadra informed him of the loss of his work. Thereupon Sankara dictated the whole of the work from his memory. We cannot vouch for the authenticity of this story. Many stories of the kind are woven round the personality of Sankara as illustrative of his prodigious memory. However this tradition also points that the date of the composition was during the first half of the ninth century A.D. Also the passage *Asthu kaliyana Vristyai* occurring in *Ascharyachoodamani* is calculated by some scholars as Kali 1451160 corresponding to 46 *Mithunam* 10 K.E. (9th century A.D.) The date of Shri Sankara has almost been conclusively proved as between 803 and 837 A.D. by most historians and it is not now a matter of debate.

Sakthibhadra's family

The details of Sakthibhadra's personal life were buried in the tangled skien of obscurity. However a *malayanmazh* record

11. Tribhuvana ripurasiya ravana: purvajeachai Tasudalabha yithinunam Visrama: karmukasiya Rachanicharanibadham prayaso vairamathath Bhavathu bhuvana bhuthai bhuri rakshovadhana.

still kept at Vakavanjipuzha Madom at Mannadi in Adoor Taluk of the Pathanamthitta District of Kerala State discovered by the author of this narrative throws light on the birthplace and family of our immortal dramatist. The facts included therein in this rare historical document may be summarised thus: Sakthibhadra was born in Chenneerkara Swaroopam Brahmin royal house in the village of Kodumon in Adoor Taluk, Pathanamthitta District. Sakthibhadraru Savithri and Sakthibhadraru Sreedevi, two members of this family, were adopted by the family of Vakavanjipuzha Madom in M.E. 961 (A.D. 1786)[12].

According to the historical archaeology, remnants of a fort and trench are still seen at Chandanapally of the Kodumon Pakuthy. The author of the Travancore State Manual had stated that this fort belonged to the Chenneerkara Royal Family which ruled the place with Kodumon as their capital[13]. But no indication about this royal house is found anywhere, in the accounts of the foreign and indigenous writers on Kerala History except a stray reference by Robert Sewell in his South Indian inscriptions. It is probable that this Brahmin royal chief would have been one among the several petty local chieftains under the Kulasekhara Perumals who once ruled Kerala with their capital at Mahodayapuram. At that ime Kerala was having its own local institutions of a self-governing character. There were in ancient Kerala organisations such as the "Three Hundred" the "Five Hundred", the "Six Hundred" and the "Five Thousand", which checked the despotism of the local rulers and preseved the rights and privileges of the people at large. Kerala was divided into several Nads under local chieftains called *Vazhkai Vazhis*. Each *Nad* consisted of *Desoms, Karas, Taras, Cherries* or other similar divisions. The popular assemblies in these divisions and subdivisions were called *Kuttams*. Each of these Kuttams had its specific functions to perform. Accordingly the *Kuttam* of the *Tara* or the *Desom* used to discuss purely

12 Vadakkumkur Rajaraja Varma, the author of the history of Sanskrit literature in Malayalam states that Mannadi is in Kunnathunad Taluk which is for all purposes geographically incorrect.

13. Travancore State Manual Vol IV by T. K. Velu Pillai, p. 664

local issues and that of the nadu, matters of greater and general importance. These *Kuttams* functioned vigorously in the past. They played a significant role in organising public opinion against the unilateral autocratic acts of the rulers. There is a story current among the people at Aikad Kara of Kodumon Desom which unfolds the high degree of political consciousness shown by these local democratic assemblies. The Aikad Kara was once ruled by a Thampuran by name Ompalli. It so happened that the entire population rose as one man, against this chieftain one fine morning and drove him out of the Kara. There are some people who still believe that the curse of the Thampuran still hangs over the heads of the local people impeding the development of the area. Whatever be the truth of this old story, it is indicative of the high sense of political consciousness evinced by these local institutions in their fight against the despotic acts of their rulers[14]. It may also be noted that Velu Thampi and Pazhassi Raja made use of these *Kuttams* in their fight against royal autocracy and foreign domination. It cannot however be denied that judged by modern standards, the democratic and representative character of these institutions, suffered from certain drawbacks. The *Kuttams* were dominated by the Brahmin and Nair aristocracy and were not fully representative of the people. That is why Dr. John Mathai once remarked that the institutions of village self-government which prevailed throughout India were hardly in existence in Kerala. He was of the view that the system bore the characteristics more of a feudal society than village communities. Nevertheless, these local institutions functioned actively in some form or other in ancient and medieval Kerala till the break-up of the self-sufficient economy under the impact of British rule in the nineteenth century. Since Kodumon is mentioned in old records as "Kodumon Desom" it was one of these divisions of ancient Kerala and that Sakthibhadra Brahmin royal House was ruling over that part of the country.

Sakthibhadra's family had its seat near the present Vaikuntapuram Temple at Kodumon. This family was having suzerainty

14. Presidential Address at the 21st Session of the Indian History Congress held at Trivandrum in 1958.

over two or more temples of this *Pakuthy*. The local ploughmen have come across underground granite-lined cellars and chiselled granite slabs in front of the paddy fields the temple. This leads to the conclusion that the Brahmin royal *madom* might have been situated near these paddy fields. Another seat of this Brahmin royal house was at Alkad ward of the Kodumon pakuthy. The seat was *Kizhadathu* which is a corruption of *Kizae Madom*.

About the name Sakthibhadra

It is claimed by some scholars that Sakthibhadra was only a pseudonym and that the real name of the poet was Sankara. An attempt had been therefore made by some scholars to identify him with Sankaracharaya, the *advaitha* philosopher. But no evidence to the effect is yet forthcoming. It may be proper therefore to assume that Sankara, the author of *Ascharyachoodamani* was known as Sakthibhadra which was the family title. The fact is clearly stated in the *sthapana* of the drama. That Sakthibhadra was the title is also clearly seen from the documents relating to Vakavanjipuzha Chief.

Ascharyachoodamani's theme

It has already been seen that *Ascharyachoodamani* had the distinction of being the first full-blown drama in Sanskrit from South India. Its theme is the perennial Rama story and the author effectivly embellishes it with inventions of his own. It deals with the Rama story in seven acts, beginning with the Surpanakha episode and ending with the fire-ordeal of Sita. Sakthibhadra impresses his work with his masterly judgement when he deviates from *Valmiki* in the construction of the plot. For instance, Sita's abduction is made least objectionable by *Ravana* approaching her in *Rama*'s disguise and misleading her by a false announcement of Bharata's kingdom being in danger. The real victory of the dramatist lies in his dropping of the *Viskambas* and the adoption of *Ankavatara* wherever practicable. This facilitates quickness of action inevitable for its successful presentation on the stage. His style is lucid and graceful. Winternit epitomizes the charctristics of the drama in the following words. "His work had certainly revolutionized

the whole structure and character of South Indian Sanskrit drama and bears the impression of his creative genius. It will be difficult to find such an accumulation of wonders in any other Sanskrit play as we find in the seven acts of Ascharyachoodamani. We see the Rakshasi Surpanakha, now as a seductive charming woman, and then again in her terrible demonlike shape, a giantess cutting the clouds with her knife-like finger nails, etc. (Acts I & II), the demon Marica in the shape of a golden antelope, the wonderful crest jewell and the miraculous ring, by which the demons are forced to show their form, true Ravana and his charioteer appearing as Rama and Lakshmana, and Surpanakha as Sita (Act III), the abduction of Sita by Ravana in the shape of Rama, Ravana's fight with the heavenly bird Jatayu (Act IV), ten-headed Ravana trying in vain to win the love of the unfortunate Sita (Act V), the ape Hanuman, Rama's trusted friend, bringing a happy message to Sita (Act VI), and finally-the wonder of all wonders-Sita's fire ordeal (Act VII), when Agni and all the gods appear to vouch for the purity of the faithful wife, and Narada brings the heavenly car Pushpaka in which Rama and Sita are to be taken to Ayodhya. Scene follows upon scene like pictures in a cinematograph".

This eminent work had been trnslated as erly as 1873 into Malayalam by Mahakavi Kodungalloor Kunjikuttan Thampuran long before it had been borught out by the Balamanorama publishers of Mylapore. Among Kunjikuttan Thampuran's rendering of Sanskrit dramas, his Malayalam rendering of Ascharyachoodamini is the best *Ascharyachoodamani* was largely used by the *Chakkiars* of Kerala in their narration of *Kudiyattom*[15]. *Kudiyattom* is extensively known for its explicitness and appropriateness for stage effect. This very fact is therefore clear proof of the great stage effect of this drama.

Sakthibhadra's Other works

Prior to this great epic, Sakthibhadra had written other works

15. According to Vadakkumkur, the original name was Ramabhadran. Later on Ramabhadra became a worshipper of Sakthi and consequently he added before his name Sakthi retaining bhadran and this became Sakthibhadra. Kerala Samscrita Sahitya Charithram. p. 54.

like *Unmadavasavadatta*. He alludes to this work even though quite reticently in the *stapana* of Ascharyachoodamani. It is argued by a section of the scholars that the widely known Sanskrit drama *Veenavasavadatta* is the *Unmadavasavadatta* referred in the *stapana* of Ascharyachoodamani. Also it is held by many a scholar that the *Abhisehka Natakom* and *Prathima Natakom* accredited to Bhasa, were the works of Sakthibhadra as discernable from the comparable expressions and other dramatic techniques adopted by Sakthibhadra in his Ascharyachoodamani.

It can be said without fear of exaggeration that the imitations and performances of ancient classical dramas like *Ascharya-choodamani* coloured, shaped and greatly influenced the modern dramatic compositions most momentously. *Ascharyachoodamani* is one of the liveliest classical dramas and unmistakably the imitation and engrafting of this classical drama by the various languages of India have only enriched their literary heritage. ●

16. In Rajendra Chola's Tiruvaduthura inscription, mention is made of a gift given to one Kumara Chikandan for the performance of 'Arankam Ariyakuthu'. The mention of Arankam Ariyakuthu evidently refers to the staging of Sakthibhadra's Ascaryachudamani.

APPENDIX VI.

THE KOLLAM ERA

The Kollam Era (825 A.D.), is one of the local (traditional) eras still extant. The other indigenous ones such as Kali Era and the *Puduvaippu* era have fallen into oblivion and disuse.

The Kollam Era is a notable landmark in the history of Kerala. Till the popularization of this era, records and inscriptions were noted (or marked) in the *Kali* or Saka Era. The Mampalli Plate (149 K.E. 974 A.D.) of Shri Vallabhan Kotha of Venad was the earliest available record in epigraphy wherein the Kollam Era is mentioned. A distinct feature of the era is its commencement on Chingam 1, *the Zodiacal month of Leo* (August-September) in the Southern Kerala and on *Kanni* 1, the Zodiacal month of Virgo (September-October).

The circumstances warranting the commencement of the era cannot be postulated precisely. The traditional view as recorded by P. Shangoonny Menon is as follows. "In the *Kali* year 3926 (825 A. D.), when king Udaya Marthanda Vurmah was residing in Kollam (Quilon), he convened a council of all the learned men of Kerala with the object of introducing a new era, and after making some astronomical researches, and calculating the solar movements throughout the twelve signs of the zodiac, and counting scientifically the number of days occupied in this revolution in every month, it was resolved to adopt the new era from the first of Chingam of that year, 15th August 825, as Kollam year one, and to call it the solar year.

This arrangement was approved of by all the wise men of the time, and every neighbouring country began to adopt the same. And this system of reckoning the year continues up to the present day throughout Keralam, as well as in every part of the kingdom of Chera, then possessed by the king of Travancore. This era has been adopted by other kings also as we see that in Madura, Tinnevelly, and other countries, the Kollam era is commonly used in reckoning the year Stone inscriptions are generally found in Tinnevelly, and other localities, which

corroborate this statement. The old records in the Trevandrum pagoda show that on the 5th Chingam of the first Kollam year, i.e., five days after the promulgation of the new year, the members of the five royal Houses of the Travancore family, the Swamyar, (ecclesiastical head), and all the nobility, & c., assembled in the Trevandrum pagoda and introduced certain new rules or ordinances for the conduct of the daily, monthly, and yearly performances of poojas and other ceremonies in the pagoda. These rules are still in force in the said pagoda.[1]

This version has been disputed on the basis of absence of convincing proof. To substantiate further it is propounded that there was no ruler among Venad kings with the title of Udaya Marthanda Varma. Even granting this possibility, at best Udaya Marthanda Varma of Venad was only a vassal of the Chera Emperor of Mahodayapuram and an era promulgated by a subordinate ruler could not command acceptance in the Kerala territory. P. Shangoonny Menon, further states that "in the Kollam year 225 (1050 A. D.), the ancient pagoda was rebuilt by a Travancore sovereign whose name is not known"[2]. Thus the obliteration of the earlier evidence of the founding of the Kollam era by Udaya Marthanda Varma, becomes a distinct possibility. Historically the founding of the Kollam Era could be ascribed to Rajasekhara Varman Kulasekhara. This however is controverted by the lack of mention of his name or the Kollam Era in any of the contemporary literary works — e.g., the Astronomical treatise of Sankaranarayaniyam. It is only from the 12 century onwards that Kollam Era" began to be used extensively by the populace. The Dutchman Canter Visscher in the early 18th century lent credence to the founding of the era to mark the Cheraman Perumal . partition of his domain and the subsequent departure to Kasi (or to Mecca, according to Islamic historians). Later Francis Buchanan, basing his assumptions on the local tradition of the founding of the Kollam era in 1176 B.C. and a renewal after every 1000 years considered 825 A. D. (i.e. 2000 years after

1. A History of Travancore, p. 65—66, P. Shangoonny Menon, Trivandrum, 1983.

2. Ibid, p. 68

1176 B.C.) as the commencement of the new Kollam era. Burnell on the other hand preferred September 824 as the beginning of the Kollam era. Historians have rejected outright these contentions as hypothetical.

The author of the Malabar Manual, William Logan, bases his reasoning on the varying dates of commencement of the Kollam Era on the breakaway or secession of Venad and Kolathunad from the Perumal dominance. But these occurred only in the early part of th 12th century, whereas 825 A.D. is the year associated with the commencement of the Kollam Era.

Yet another spoke in the wheel of controversy surrounding the origin of the Kollam Era is the linking of the Sankaracharya with the founding of the era. One of the versions of the *Keralolpathi*, avers that the learned Saint started the Kollam Era to commemorate the introduction of the *Anacharams*. This contention has been refuted principally on the ground that Sankaracharya passed away around 820 A.D. — i.e. quite ahead of 825 A. D. the date of the Kollam Era. A further differing view states that the origin of the Kollam Era was related to the date of the founding of the towns of Kurakkeni Kollam and Panthalayini Kollam. But this version, is discounted by the existence of the above mentioned towns even before 825 A.D.

Similarly, it is also argued on the basis of a mention in a Kannada chronicle *Bellala Rayena Yudha*, that the Kollam Era 825 A.D. was introduced to commemorate the founding of Kollam (Quilon). The evidences cited as proof of this contention are scanty and credulous. The absence of historical proof and convincing documentary evidence lend weight to its rejection.

Similarly untenable is the attribution of the founding of the era to the establishment of the Christian community in Quilon. Another defective hypothesis is the founding of the era to the origin of the Onam festival in 825 A.D. This too is unsustainable, because of the time honoured observance of the festival long before the 9th century.

To Dr. Gundert, Kollam Era commenced with the erection

of a Siva temple in Quilon, with the ascendancy of Quilon as a commercial emporium, the use of the era became widespread. This view does not find acceptance on the ground that there is no important Siva temple of antiquity in Quilon or Panthalayani Kollam.

The most convincing argument for the founding of the era in 825 was posited by Prof. P. Sundaram Pillay.[3] In his reasoning, the Kollam Era was a modification of the *Saptarshi Era* or *Sastra Samvatsara*. The *Saptarshi* Era might have been a legacy bequeathed to Kerala by the Aryan immigrants. When their domicile expanded in and around Quilon in the 9th century, a new era would have been introduced for local ephemeral reckoning. This view has been endorsed by later historians like K. P. Padmanabha Menon and Prof. Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillay.

Notwithstanding the widespread acceptance of Kollam Era commencing from 825 A.D., the lack of unanimity on its origin still continues to baffle alike the minds of the scholar and the layman

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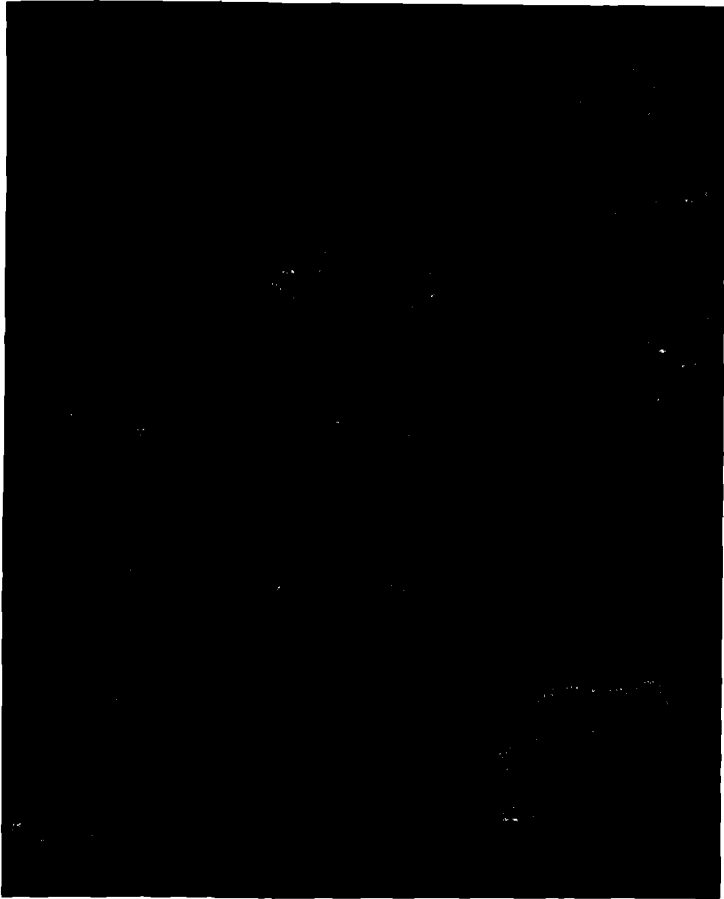
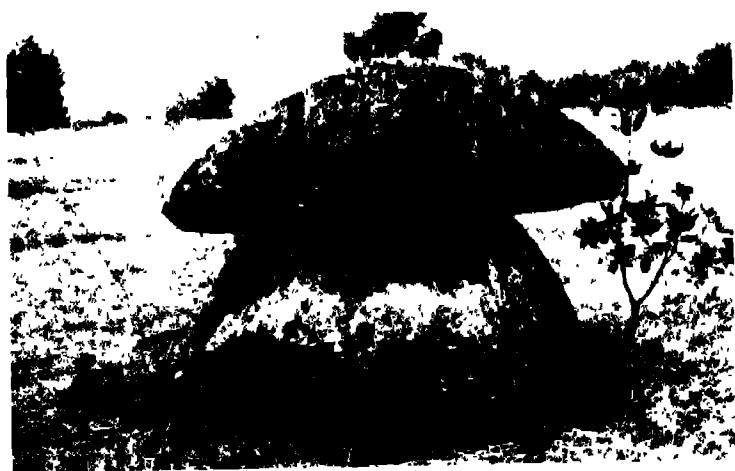
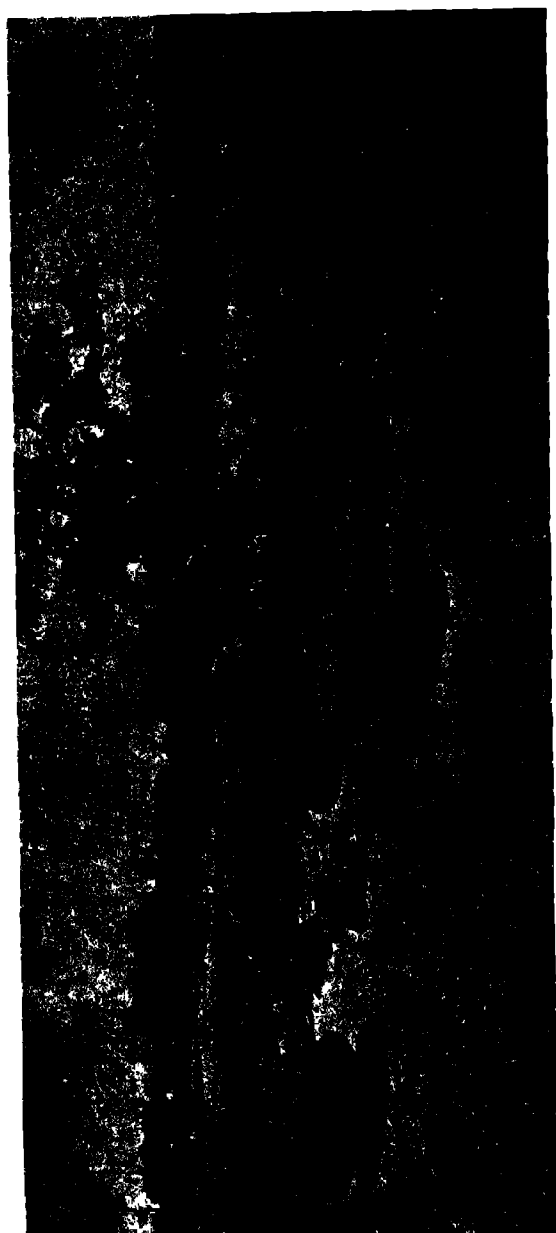
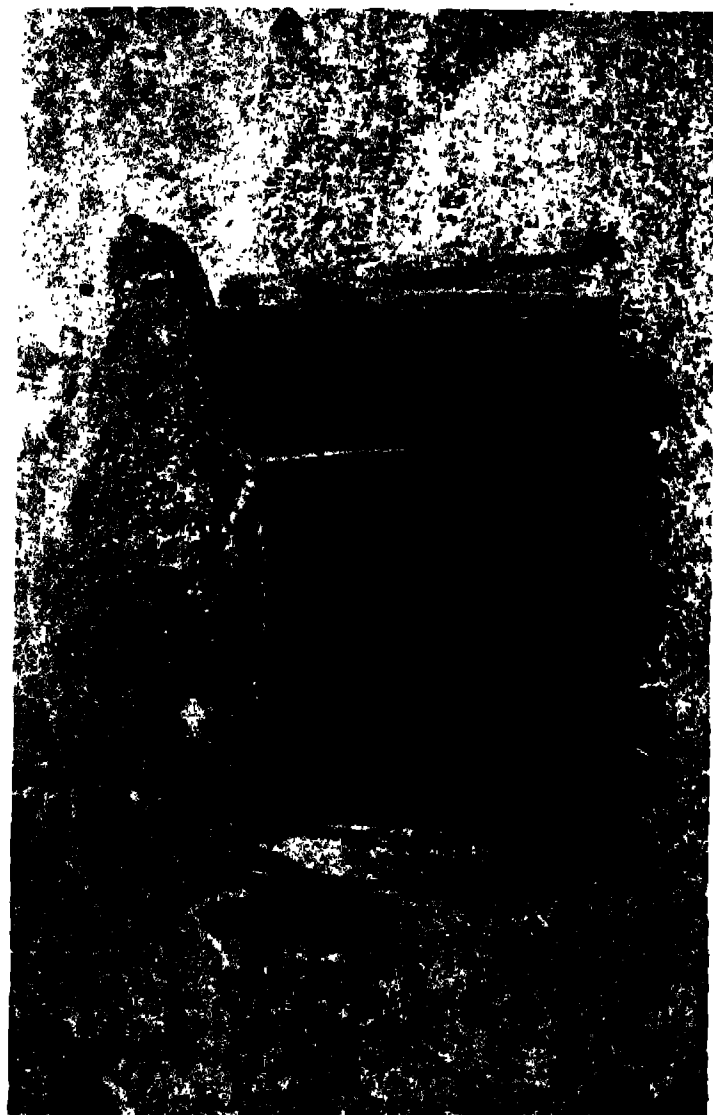
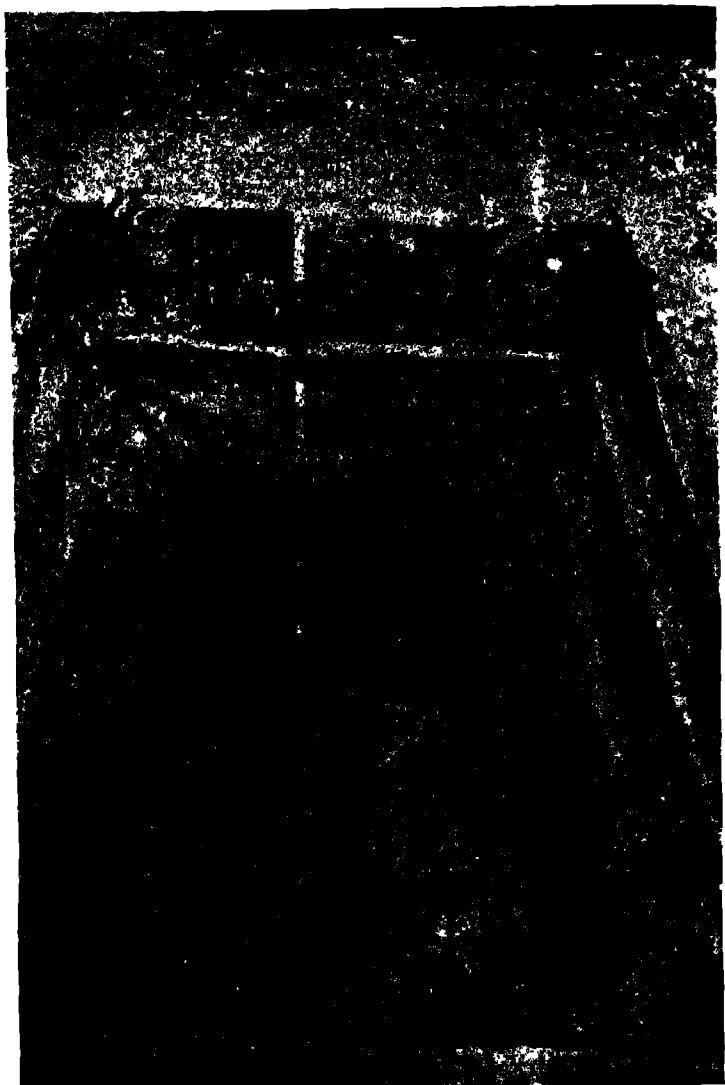
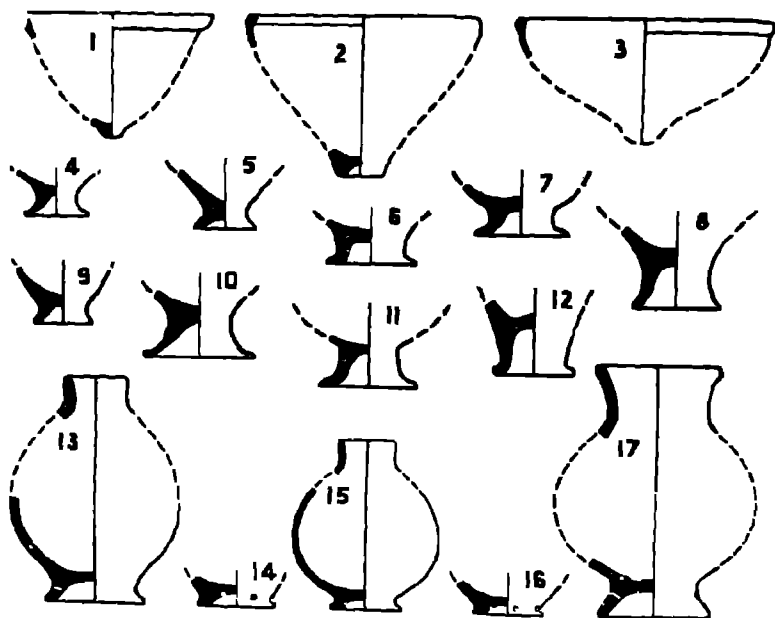
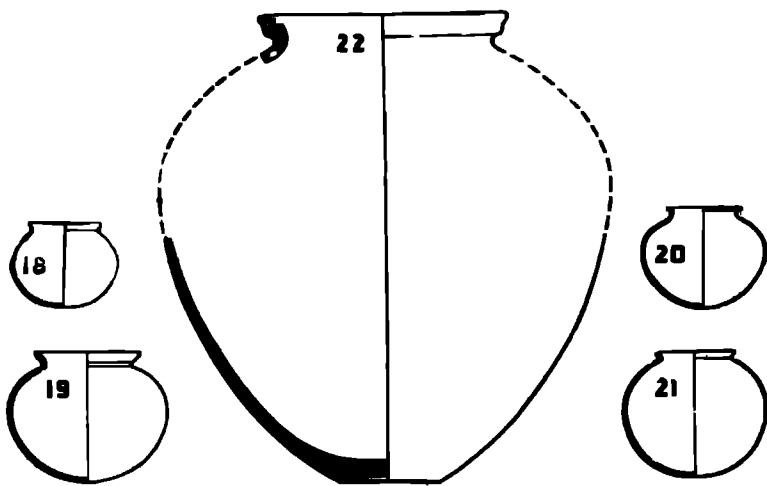
3 The readers interested in the subject may refer the article on K. E., p. 200—216 in Studies in Kerala History. Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillay, June 1970.

Neolithic Monument discovered by Babington from Kanyakode Hill, Malabar

Microliths from Chevayur, Calicut
(With courtsey to British Museum)

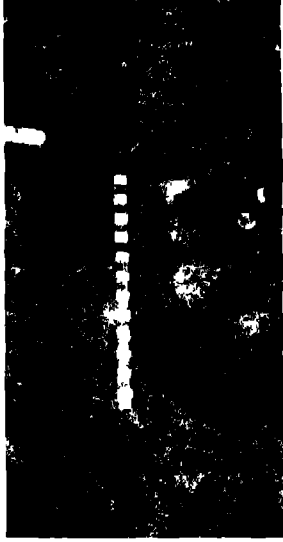
Laterite Monument at Angadipuram

Koda Kallu

A group of Topikallus, Ariyannur

Dolmen near Trichur

Multiple Rock-cave, Kattakambal

A Cist inside Stone Circle, Porkalam

Pottery Types 1 to 17 (½) From the Megalithic Burials, Valapai, near Trichur

1 Bowl with slightly tapering sides, wide mouth and pointed bottom
2 Bowl with averted rim, tapering sides and convex base
3 Bowl with averted rim, tapering sides, bulged at the top and pointed bottom
4 to 12 Bowls with hollow pedestal bases
13 to 16 Small-sized jars with short pedestal bases, bulged profiles and narrow necks.
17 Fragments of wide-mouth beaker with long neck and concave base

Pottery Types 18 to 22 (¼) From the Megalithic Burials, Valapai, near Trichur

18 to 21 Popular types of pots with prominent rims, carinated and saggar base

22 Jar with flaring rim, carinated shape and flat base

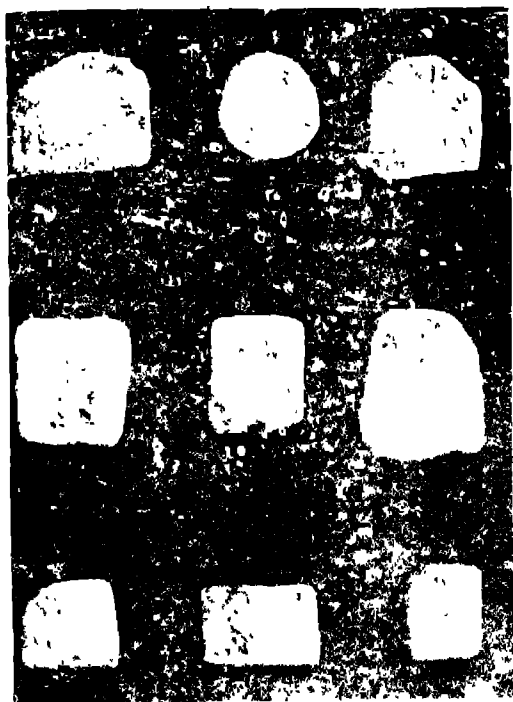
Megalithic Burials, Valapai, near Trichur

Burial Tomb A. Excavated

1 Top stone exposed

2. Top stone turned over

3 Photo showing the nature and size of the pit

4 Pottery deposits below the stone

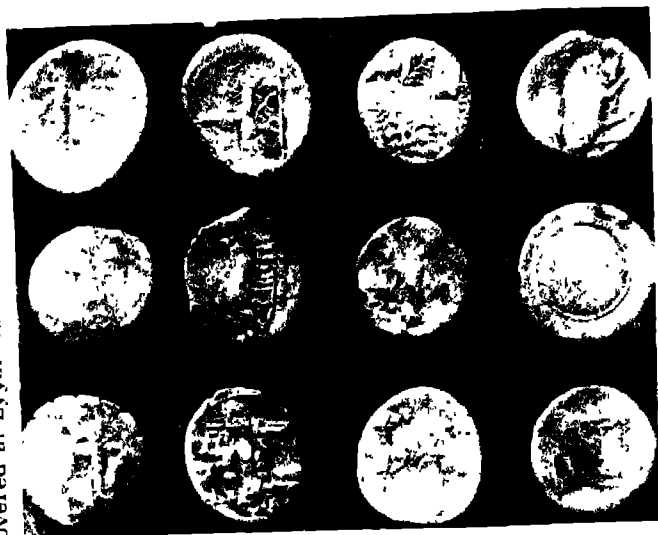
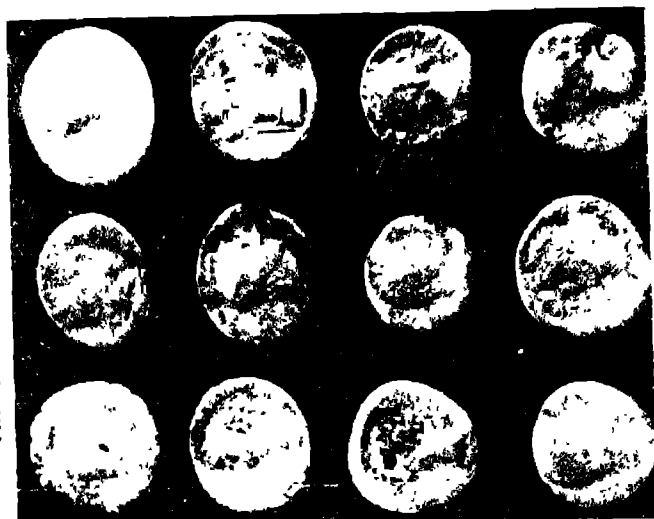
A set of 9 undated Punch-marked Coins discovered at Eyyal (Cochin)

Obverse

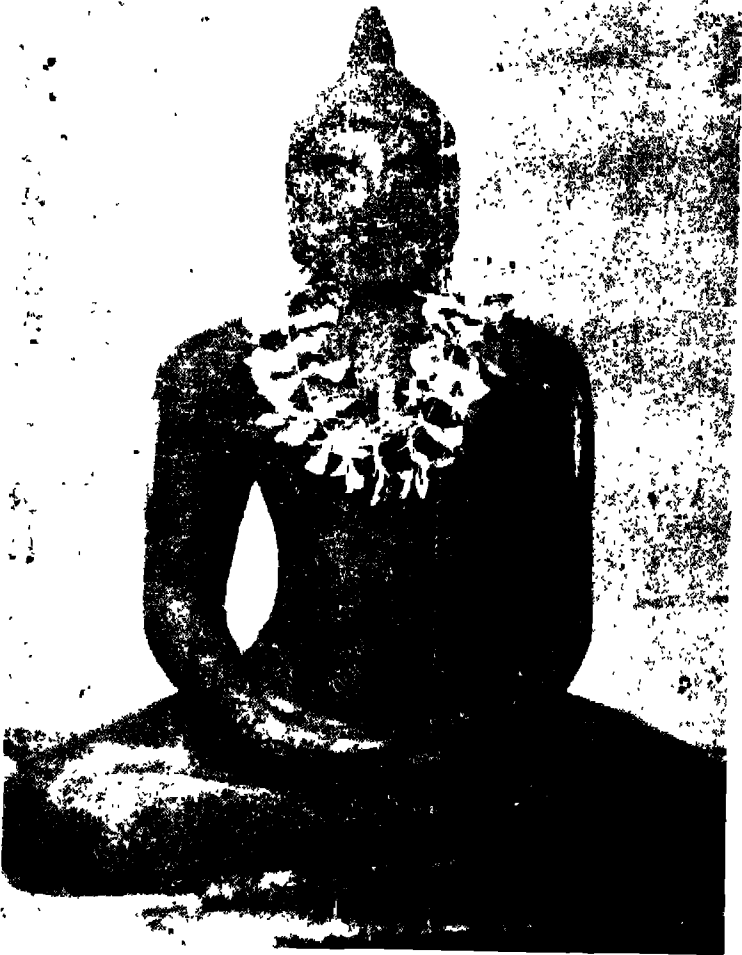
A Lateritic outcrops and stone shelters in the Maraiyur area
Anjunad Valley. Idukky District

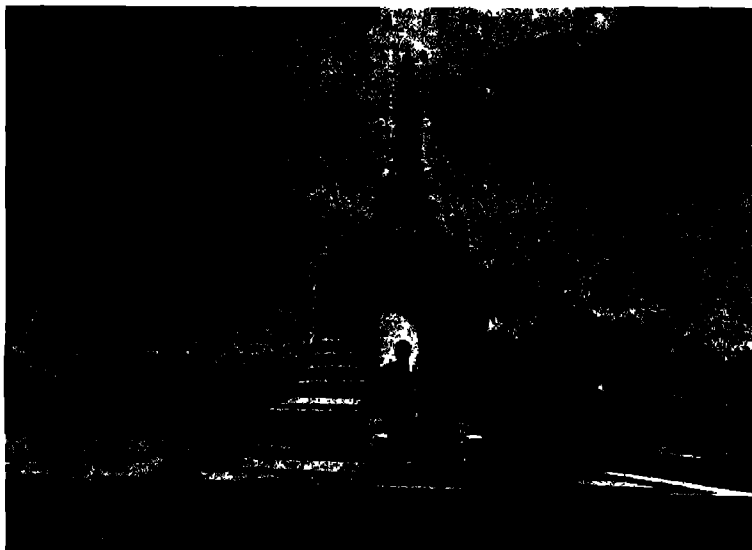
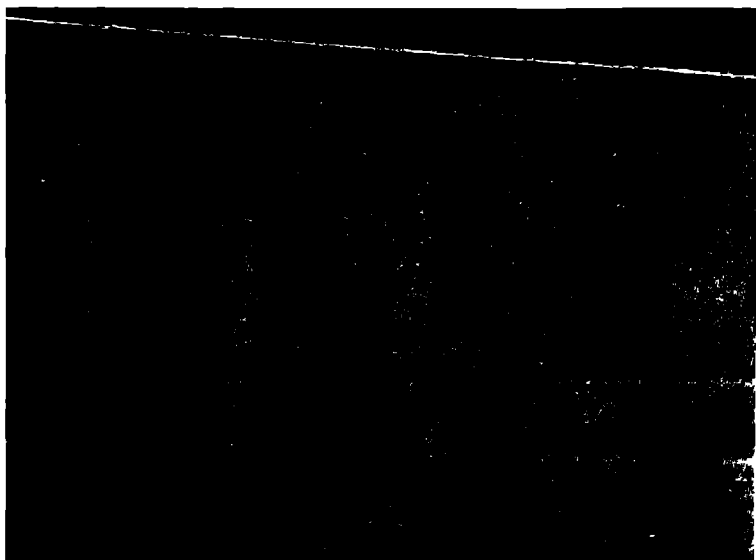
A set of 12 Roman Silver Coins discovered at Eyyal Ist-2nd Century A.D.

Obverse

Reverse

Another set of 12 Roman Silver Coins discovered at Eyyal 1st-2nd Century A. D.

Obverse

Reverse

Bharanikavu Buddha

Mavelikara Buddha

Karumadikuttan (Stupa and Statue)

The small enclosure put up around the Image of Buddha

Jaina bas-relief at the Bhagavati temple in Kallil, Ernakulam District.

Buddha at Paruvasseri

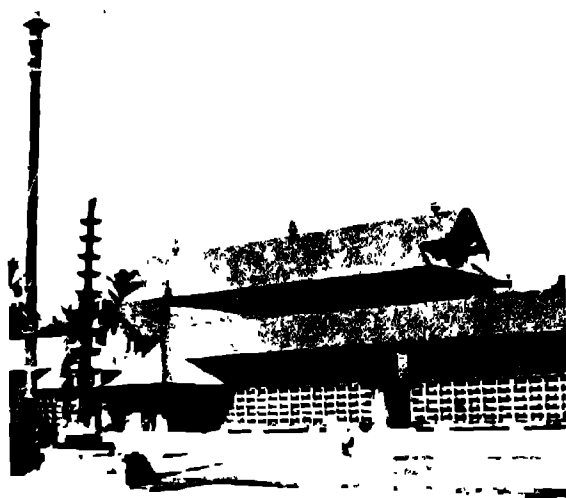
I The image of Buddha in Kilirur Temple, Kottayam

The figure of Buddha done in clay

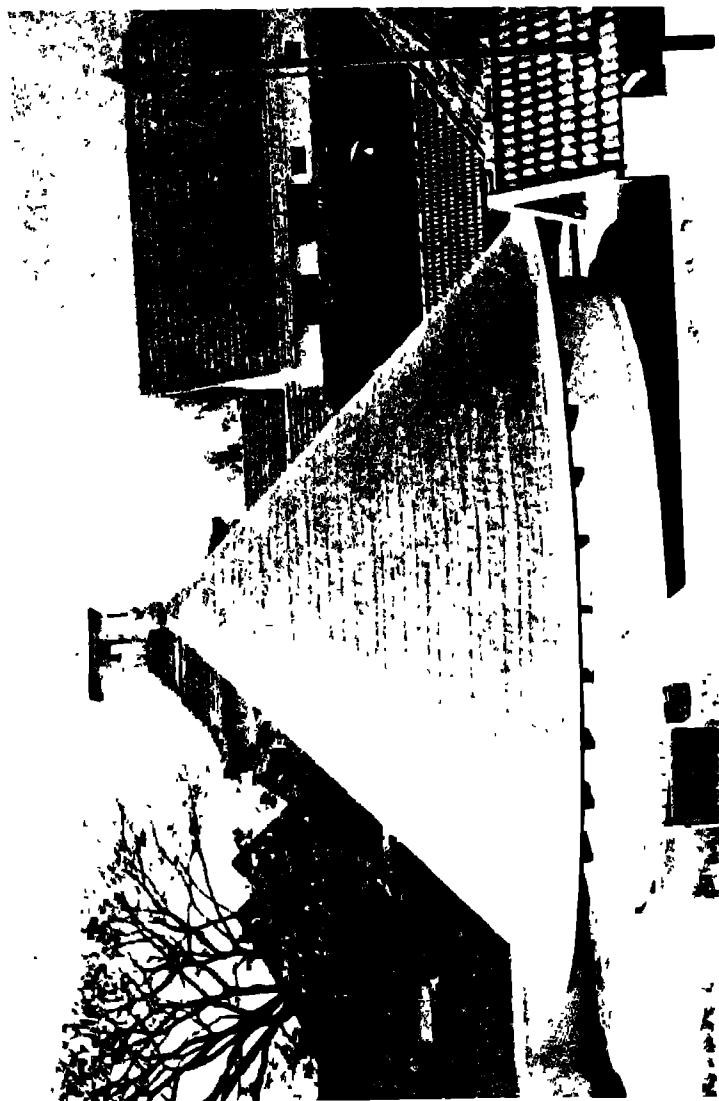
Rock-cut Siva shrine at Vilinjam, Trivandrum District.

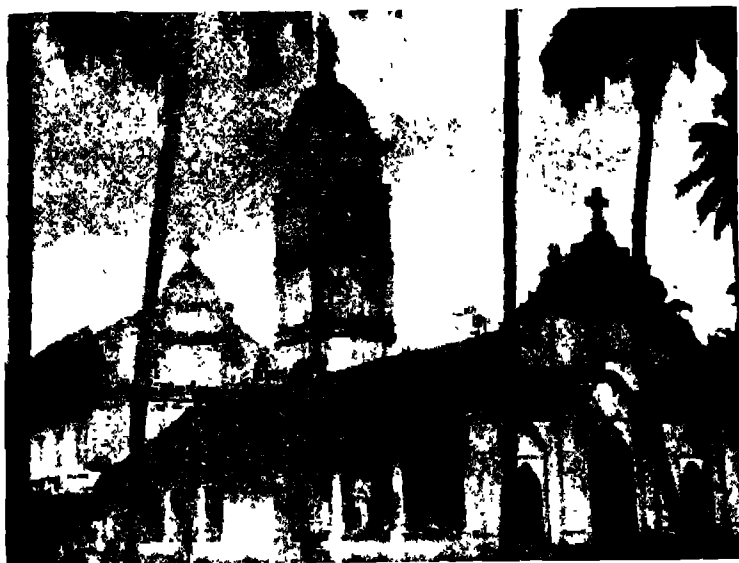
— Inner ambulatory of Kaviyur

Wall carving, Kaviyur

Approach to the Sri Mahadeva temple, Kaviyur, Alleppey District

Inner prakara at Kaviyur

Kaladi, the birth-place of Sankaracharya

(Bracket figure at Thiruvanchikulam temple with "Hoysala" elements, Trichur District.

View from Mattancheri Palace, Cochin, towards temple and synagogue.

Mosque at Cranganore

St Thomas Church, Palayur

Kuthirakettu Festival (Olipurathu Temple, Thattayil)

Shrine of Saint Thomas at Mylapore. Though the Saint's mission and death in India are probably legendary, his reputed burial place was a centre of pilgrimage for Indian Christians. (Arnold Toynbee)

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